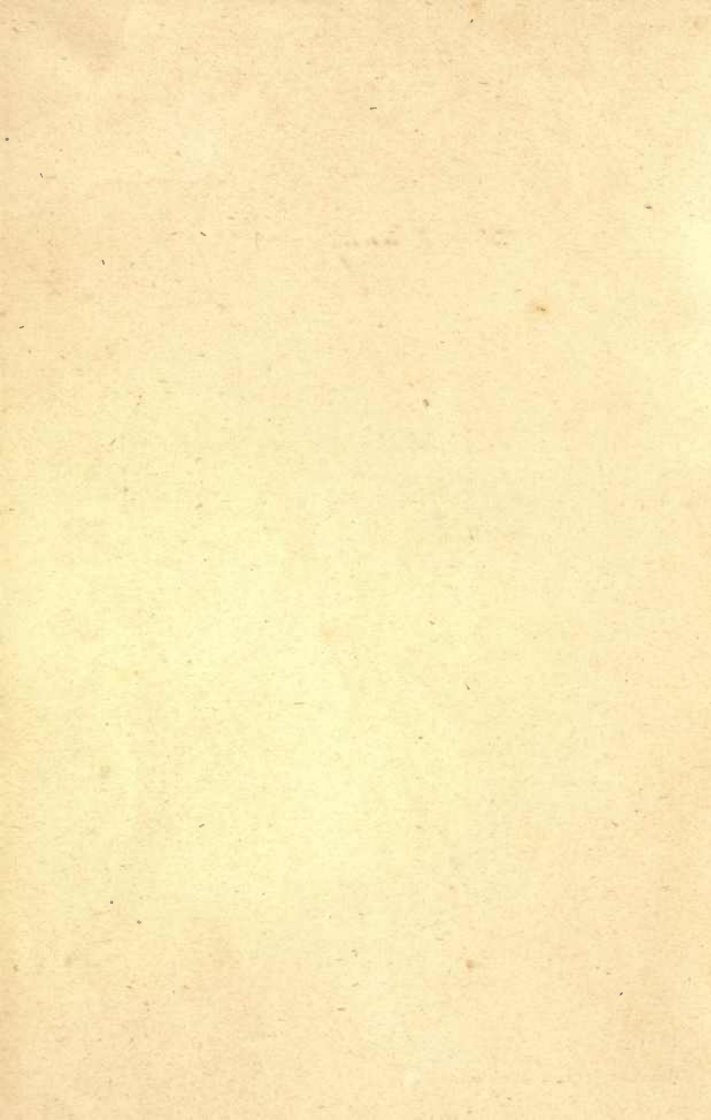


Fanny More

Dec. 4th 1861











Governor



CLOVERNOOK

OR

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE WEST.

BY

ALICE CAREY.



REDFIELD,

CLINTON HALL, NEW YORK.

1852.

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A. CUNNINGHAM,
STEREOTYPER,
183 William-street.

TO VARY
AND TO VARY

TO

Rufus Willmot Griswold,

WHO SENT TO ME WHILE WE WERE STRANGERS

THE FIRST PRAISE THAT CHEERED ME IN THE PURSUITS OF LITERATURE,

AND WHOSE GENEROUS ENCOURAGEMENT

OF THE YOUNGER WRITERS OF HIS COUNTRY

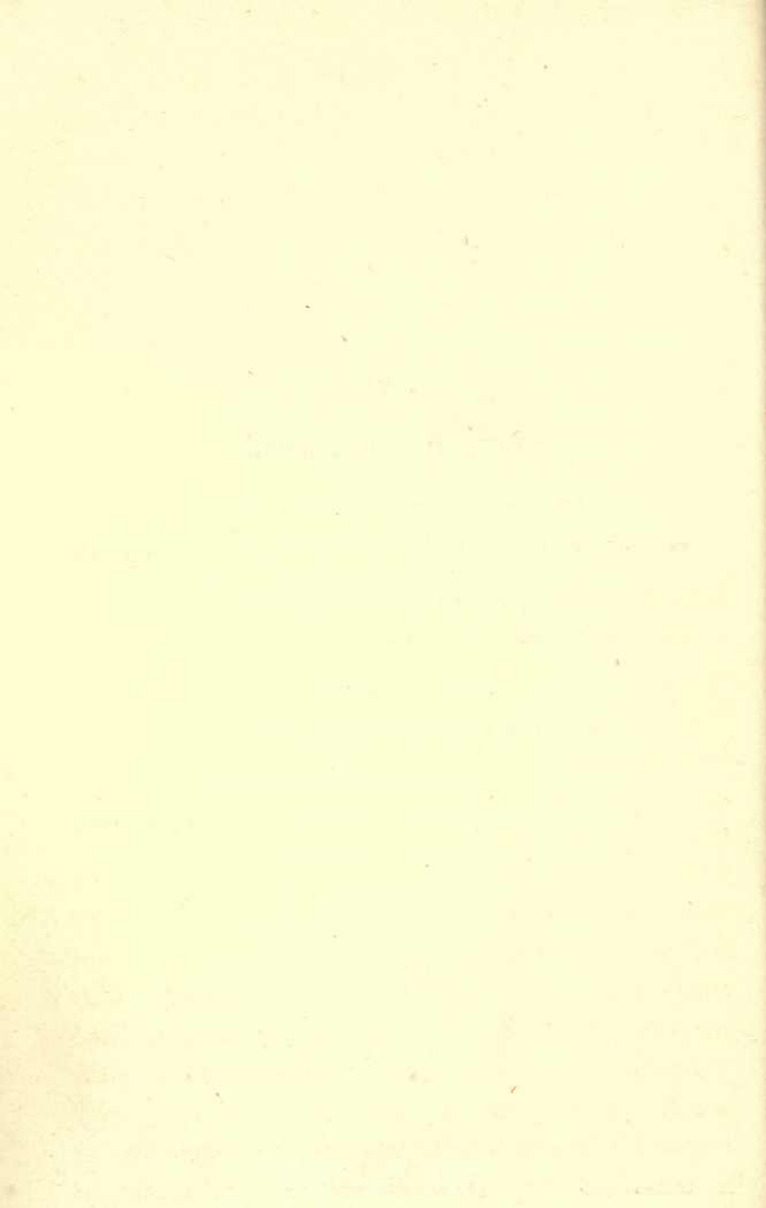
HAS BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED

IN MANY A GRATEFUL INSCRIPTION OF WORTHER WORKS,

I RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE THESE PAGES.

ALICE CAREY.

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PREFACE.

THE pastoral life of our country has not been a favorite subject of illustration by painters, poets, or writers of romance. Perhaps it has been regarded as wanting in the elements of beauty; perhaps it has been thought too passionless and even; or it may have been deemed too immediate and familiar. I have had little opportunity for its observation in the eastern and northern states, and in the south there is no such life, and in the far west where pioneers are still busy with felling the opposing trees, it is not yet time for the reed's music; but in the interior of my native state, which was a wilderness when first my father went to it, and is now crowned with a dense and prosperous population, there is surely as much in the simple manners, and the little histories every day revealed, to interest us in humanity, as there *can* be in those old empires where the press of tyrannous

laws and the deadening influence of hereditary acquiescence necessarily destroy the best life of society.

Without a thought of making a book, I began to recall some shadows and sunbeams that fell about me as I came up to womanhood, incidents for the most part of so little apparent moment or significance that they who live in what is called the world would scarcely have marked them had they been detained with me while they were passing, and before I was aware, the record of my memories grew to all I now have printed.

Looking over the proof sheets, as from day to day they have come from my publisher, the thought has frequently been suggested that such experiences as I have endeavored to describe will fail to interest the inhabitants of cities, where, however much there may be of pity there is surely little of sympathy for the poor and humble, and perhaps still less of faith in their capacity for those finer feelings which are too often deemed the blossoms of a high and fashionable culture. The masters of literature who at any time have attempted the exhibition of rural life, have, with few exceptions, known scarcely anything of it from participation, and however brilliant may have been their pictures, therefore, they have seldom been true. Perhaps in their extravagance has been their greatest charm. For myself, I confess I have no invention, and I am altogether too poor an artist to dream of

any success which may not be won by the simplest fidelity. I believe that for these sketches I may challenge of competent witnesses at least this testimony, that the circumstances have a natural and probable air which should induce their reception as honest relations unless there is conclusive evidence against them. Having this merit, they may perhaps interest if they do not instruct readers who have regarded the farming class as essentially different and inferior, and entitled only to that peculiar praise they are accustomed to receive in the resolutions of political conventions.

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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE WEST.

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE WEST.

MY GRANDFATHER.

CHANGE is the order of nature; the old makes way for the new; over the perished growth of the last year brighten the blossoms of this. What changes are to be counted, even in a little noiseless life like mine! How many graves have grown green; how many locks have grown gray; how many, lately young, and strong in hope and courage, are faltering and fainting; how many hands that reached eagerly for the roses are drawn back bleeding and full of thorns; and, saddest of all, how many hearts are broken! I remember when I had no sad memory, when I first made room in my bosom for the consciousness of death. How—like striking out from a wilderness of dew-wet blossoms where the shimmer of the light is lovely as the wings of a thousand bees, into an open plain where the clear day strips things to their natural truth—we go from young visions to the realities of life!

I remember the twilight, as though it were yesterday—gray, and dim, and cold, for it was late in October, when the shadow first came over my heart, that no subsequent sunshine has ever swept entirely away. From the window of our cottage home streamed a column of light, in which I sat stringing the red berries of the brier-rose.

I had heard of death, but regarded it only with that vague apprehension which I felt for the demons and witches that gather poison herbs under the new moon, in fairy forests, or strangle harmless travellers with wands of the willow, or with vines of the wild grape or ivy. I did not much like to think about them, and yet I felt safe from their influence.

There might be people, somewhere, that would die some time; I didn't know, but it would not be myself, or any one I knew. They were so well and so strong, so full of joyous hopes, how could their feet falter, and their eyes grow dim, and their fainting hands lay away their work, and fold themselves together! No, no—it was not a thing to be believed.

Drifts of sunshine from that season of blissful ignorance often come back, as lightly

As the winds of the May-time flow,
And lift up the shadows brightly
As the daffodil lifts the snow—

the shadows that have gathered with the years! It is pleasant to have them thus swept off—to find myself a child again—the crown of pale pain and sorrow that presses heavily now, unfelt, and the graves that lie lonesomely along my way, covered up with flowers—to feel my mother's dark locks falling on my cheek, as she teaches me the lesson or the prayer—to see my father, now a sorrowful old man whose hair has thinned and whitened almost to the limit of three score years and ten, fresh and vigorous, strong for the race—and to see myself a little child, happy with a new hat and a pink ribbon, or even with the string of brier-buds that I called coral. Now I tie it about my neck, and now around my forehead, and now twist it among my hair, as I have somewhere read great ladies do their pearls. The winds are blowing the last yellow leaves from the cherry tree—I know not why, but it makes me sad. I draw closer to the light of the window, and slyly peep within: all is quiet and cheerful; the logs on the hearth are ablaze; my father is mending a bridle-rein, which "Traveller," the favorite riding horse, snapt in two yesterday, when frightened at the elephant that (covered with a great white cloth) went by to be exhibited at

the coming show,—my mother is hemming a ruffle, perhaps for me to wear to school next quarter—my brother is reading in a newspaper, I know not what, but I see, on one side, the picture of a bear: let me listen—and flattening my cheek against the pane, I catch his words distinctly, for he reads loud and very clearly—it is an improbable story of a wild man who has recently been discovered in the woods of some far-away island—he seems to have been there a long time, for his nails are grown like claws, and his hair, in rough and matted strings, hangs to his knees; he makes a noise like something between the howl of a beast and a human cry, and, when pursued, runs with a nimbleness and swiftness that baffle the pursuers, though mounted on the fleetest of steeds, urged through brake and bush to their utmost speed. When first seen, he was sitting on the ground and cracking nuts with his teeth; his arms are corded with sinews that make it probable his strength is sufficient to strangle a dozen men; and yet on seeing human beings, he runs into the thick woods, lifting such a hideous scream, the while, as make his discoverers clasp their hands to their ears. It is suggested that this is not a solitary individual, become wild by isolation, but that a race exists, many of which are perhaps larger and of more terrible aspects; but whether they have any intelligible language, and whether they live in caverns of rocks or in trunks of hollow trees, remains for discovery by some future and more daring explorers.

My brother puts down the paper and looks at the picture of the bear. “I would not read such foolish stories,” says my father, as he holds the bridle up to the light, to see that it is neatly mended; my mother breaks the thread which gathers the ruffle; she is gentle and loving, and does not like to hear even implied reproof, but she says nothing; little Harry, who is playing on the floor, upsets his block-house, and my father, clapping his hands together, exclaims, “This is the house that Jack built!” and adds, patting Harry on the head, “Where is my little boy? this is not he, this is a little carpenter; you must make your houses stronger, little carpenter!” But Harry insists that he is the veritable little Harry, and no carpenter, and hides his tearful eyes in the lap of my mother, who assures

him that he is her own little boy, and soothes his childish grief by buttoning on his neck the ruffle she has just completed; and off he scampers again, building a new house, the roof of which he makes very steep, and calls it grandfather's house, at which all laugh heartily.

While listening to the story of the wild man I am half afraid, but now, as the joyous laughter rings out, I am ashamed of my fears, and skipping forth, I sit down on a green ridge which cuts the door-yard diagonally, and where, I am told, there was once a fence. Did the rose-bushes and lilacs and flags that are in the garden, ever grow here? I think—no, it must have been a long while ago, if indeed the fence were ever here, for I can't conceive the possibility of such change, and then I fall to arranging my string of brier-buds into letters that will spell some name, now my own, and now that of some one I love. A dull strip of cloud, from which the hues of pink and red and gold have but lately faded out, hangs low in the west; below is a long reach of withering woods—the gray sprays of the beech clinging thickly still, and the gorgeous maples shooting up here and there like sparks of fire among the darkly magnificent oaks and silvery columned sycamores—the gray and murmurous twilight gives way to darker shadows and a deeper hush.

I hear, far away, the beating of quick hoof-strokes on the pavement; the horseman, I think to myself, is just coming down the hill through the thick woods beyond the bridge. I listen close, and presently a hollow rumbling sound indicates that I was right; and now I hear the strokes more faintly—he is climbing the hill that slopes directly away from me; but now again I hear distinctly—he has almost reached the hollow below me—the hollow that in summer is starry with dandelions and now is full of brown nettles and withered weeds—he will presently have passed—where can he be going, and what is his errand? I will rise up and watch. The cloud passes from the face of the moon, and the light streams full and broad on the horseman—he tightens his rein, and looks eagerly toward the house—surely I know him, the long red curls, streaming down his neck, and the straw hat, are not to be mistaken—it is

Oliver Hillhouse, the miller, whom my grandfather, who lives in the steep-roofed house, has employed three years—longer than I can remember! He calls to me, and I laughingly bound forward, with an exclamation of delight, and put my arms about the slender neck of his horse, that is champing the bit and pawing the pavement, and I say, "Why do you not come in?"

He smiles, but there is something ominous in his smile, as he hands me a folded paper, saying, "Give this to your mother;" and, gathering up his reins, he rides hurriedly forward. In a moment I am in the house, for my errand, "Here, mother, is a paper which Oliver Hillhouse gave me for you." Her hand trembles as she receives it, and waiting timidly near, I watch her as she reads; the tears come, and without speaking a word she hands it to my father.

That night there came upon my soul the shadow of an awful fear; sorrowful moans and plaints disturbed my dreams that have never since been wholly forgot. How cold and spectral-like the moonlight streamed across my pillow; how dismal the chirping of the cricket in the hearth; and how more than dismal the winds among the naked boughs that creaked against my window. For the first time in my life I could not sleep, and I longed for the light of the morning. At last it came, whitening up the East, and the stars faded away, and there came a flush of crimson and purple fire, which was presently pushed aside by the golden disk of the sun. Daylight without, but within there was thick darkness still.

I kept close about my mother, for in her presence I felt a shelter and protection that I found no where else.

"Be a good girl till I come back," she said, stooping and kissing my forehead; "mother is going away to-day, your poor grandfather is very sick."

"Let me go too," I said, clinging close to her hand. We were soon ready; little Harry pouted his lips and reached out his hands, and my father gave him his pocket-knife to play with; and the wind blowing the yellow curls over his eyes and forehead, he stood on the porch looking eagerly while my mother turned to see him again and again. We had before us

a walk of perhaps two miles—northwardly along the turnpike nearly a mile, next, striking into a grass-grown road that crossed it, in an easterly direction nearly another mile, and then turning northwardly again, a narrow lane bordered on each side by old and decaying cherry-trees, led us to the house, ancient fashioned, with high steep gables, narrow windows, and low, heavy chimneys of stone. In the rear was an old mill, with a plank sloping from the door-sill to the ground, by way of step, and a square open window in the gable, through which, with ropes and pulleys, the grain was drawn up.

This mill was an especial object of terror to me, and it was only when my aunt Carry led me by the hand, and the cheerful smile of Oliver Hillhouse lighted up the dusky interior, that I could be persuaded to enter it. In truth it was a lonesome sort of place, with dark lofts and curious binns, and ladders leading from place to place; and there were cats creeping stealthily along the beams in wait for mice or swallows, if, as sometimes happened, the clay nest should be loosened from the rafter, and the whole tumble ruinously down. I used to wonder that aunt Carry was not afraid in the old place, with its eternal rumble, and its great dusty wheel moving slowly round and round, beneath the steady tread of the two sober horses that never gained a hair's breadth for their pains; but on the contrary, she seemed to like the mill, and never failed to show me through all its intricacies, on my visits. I have unravelled the mystery now, or rather, from the recollections I still retain, have apprehended what must have been clear to older eyes at the time.

A forest of oak and walnut stretched along this extremity of the farm, and on either side of the improvements (as the house and barn and mill were called) shot out two dark forks, completely cutting off the view, save toward the unfrequented road to the south, which was traversed mostly by persons coming to the mill, for my grandfather made the flour for all the neighborhood round about, besides making corn-meal for Johnny-cakes, and "chops" for the cows.

He was an old man now, with a tall, athletic frame, slightly bent, thin locks white as the snow, and deep blue eyes full of

fire and intelligence, and after long years of uninterrupted health and useful labor, he was suddenly stricken down, with no prospect of recovery.

“I hope he is better,” said my mother, hearing the rumbling of the mill-wheel. She might have known my grandfather would permit no interruption of the usual business on account of his illness—the neighbors, he said, could not do without bread because he was sick, nor need they all be idle, waiting for him to die. When the time drew near, he would call them to take his farewell and his blessing, but till then let them sew and spin, and do all things just as usual, so they would please him best. He was a stern man—even his kindness was uncompromising and unbending, and I remember of his making toward me no manifestation of fondness, such as grandchildren usually receive, save once, when he gave me a bright red apple, without speaking a word till my timid thanks brought out his “Save your thanks for something better.” The apple gave me no pleasure, and I even slipt into the mill to escape from his cold forbidding presence.

Nevertheless, he was a good man, strictly honest, and upright in all his dealings, and respected, almost revered, by everybody. I remember once, when young Winters, the tenant of Deacon Granger’s farm, who paid a great deal too much for his ground, as I have heard my father say, came to mill with some withered wheat, my grandfather filled up the sacks out of his own flour, while Tommy was in the house at dinner. That was a good deed, but Tommy Winters never suspected how his wheat happened to turn out so well.

As we drew near the house, it seemed to me more lonesome and desolate than it ever looked before. I wished I had staid at home with little Harry. So eagerly I noted every thing, that I remember to this day, that near a trough of water, in the lane, stood a little surly looking cow, of a red color, and with a white line running along her back. I had gone with aunt Carry often when she went to milk her, but to-day she seemed not to have been milked. Near her was a black and white heifer, with sharp short horns, and a square board tied over her eyes; two horses, one of them gray, and the other sorrel, with

a short tail, were reaching their long necks into the garden, and browsing from the currant bushes. As we approached they trotted forward a little, and one of them, half playfully, half angrily, bit the other on the shoulder, after which they returned quietly to their cropping of the bushes, heedless of the voice that from across the field was calling to them.

A flock of turkeys were sunning themselves about the door, for no one came to scare them away; some were black, and some speckled, some with heads erect and tails spread, and some nibbling the grass; and with a gabbling noise, and a staid and dignified march, they made way for us. The smoke arose from the chimney in blue, graceful curls, and drifted away to the woods; the dead morning-glory vines had partly fallen from the windows, but the hands that tended them were grown careless, and they were suffered to remain blackened and void of beauty, as they were. Under these, the white curtain was partly put aside, and my grandmother, with the speckled handkerchief pinned across her bosom, and her pale face, a shade paler than usual, was looking out, and seeing us she came forth, and in answer to my mother's look of inquiry, shook her head, and silently led the way in. The room we entered had some home-made carpet, about the size of a large table-cloth, spread in the middle of the floor, the remainder of which was scoured very white; the ceiling was of walnut wood, and the side walls were white-washed—a table, an old-fashioned desk, and some wooden chairs, comprised the furniture. On one of the chairs was a leather cushion; this was set to one side, my grandmother neither offering it to my mother, nor sitting in it herself, while, by way of composing herself, I suppose, she took off the black ribbon with which her cap was trimmed. This was a more simple process than the reader may fancy, the trimming, consisting merely of a ribbon, always black, which she tied around her head after the cap was on, forming a bow and two ends just above the forehead. Aunt Carry, who was of what is termed an even disposition, received us with her usual cheerful demeanor, and then, re-seating herself comfortably near the fire, resumed her work, the netting of some white fringe.

I liked aunt Carry, for that she always took especial pains to entertain me, showing me her patchwork, taking me with her to the cow-yard and dairy, as also to the mill, though in this last I fear she was a little selfish; however, that made no difference to me at the time, and I have always been sincerely grateful to her: children know more, and want more, and feel more, than people are apt to imagine.

On this occasion she called me to her, and tried to teach me the mysteries of her netting, telling me I must get my father to buy me a little bureau, and then I could net fringe and make a nice cover for it. For a little time I thought I could, and arranged in my mind where it should be placed, and what should be put into it, and even went so far as to inquire how much fringe she thought would be necessary. I never attained to much proficiency in the netting of fringe, nor did I ever get the little bureau, and now it is quite reasonable to suppose I never shall.

Presently my father and mother were shown into an adjoining room, the interior of which I felt an irrepressible desire to see, and by stealth I obtained a glimpse of it before the door closed behind them. There was a dull brown and yellow carpet on the floor, and near the bed, on which was a blue and white coverlid, stood a high-backed wooden chair, over which hung a towel, and on the bottom of which stood a pitcher, of an unique pattern. I know not how I saw this, but I did, and perfectly remember it, notwithstanding my attention was in a moment completely absorbed by the sick man's face, which was turned towards the opening door, pale, livid, and ghastly. I trembled, and was transfixed; the rings beneath the eyes, which had always been deeply marked, were now almost black, and the blue eyes within looked glassy and cold, and terrible. The expression of agony on the lips (for his disease was one of a most painful nature) gave place to a sort of smile, and the hand, twisted among the gray locks, was withdrawn and extended to welcome my parents, as the door closed. That was a fearful moment; I was near the dark steep edges of the grave; I felt, for the first time, that I was mortal too, and I was afraid.

Aunt Carry put away her work, and taking from a nail in

the window-frame a brown muslin sun-bonnet, which seemed to me of half a yard in depth, she tied it on my head, and then clapt her hands as she looked into my face, saying, "bo-peep!" at which I half laughed and half cried, and making provision for herself in grandmother's bonnet, which hung on the opposite side of the window, and was similar to mine, except that it was perhaps a little larger, she took my hand and we proceeded to the mill. Oliver, who was very busy on our entrance, came forward, as aunt Carry said, by way of introduction, "A little visiter I've brought you," and arranged a seat on a bag of meal for us, and taking off his straw hat, pushed the red curls from his low white forehead, and looked bewildered and anxious.

"It's quite warm for the season," said aunt Carry, by way of breaking silence, I suppose. The young man said "yes," abstractedly, and then asked if the rumble of the mill were not a disturbance to the sick room, to which aunt Carry answered, "No, my father says it is his music."

"A good old man," said Oliver, "he will not hear it much longer," and then, even more sadly, "every thing will be changed." Aunt Carry was silent, and he added, "I have been here a long time, and it will make me very sorry to go away, especially when such trouble is about you all."

"Oh, Oliver," said aunt Carry, "you don't mean to go away?" "I see no alternative," he replied; "I shall have nothing to do; if I had gone a year ago it would have been better." "Why?" asked aunt Carry; but I think she understood why, and Oliver did not answer directly, but said, "Almost the last thing your father said to me was, that you should never marry any who had not a house and twenty acres of land; if he has not, he will exact that promise of you, and I cannot ask you not to make it, nor would you refuse him if I did; I might have owned that long ago, but for my sister (she had lost her reason) and my lame brother, whom I must educate to be a schoolmaster, because he never can work, and my blind mother; but God forgive me! I must not and do not complain; you will forget me, before long, Carry, and some body who is richer and better, will be to you all I once hoped to be, and perhaps more."

I did not understand the meaning of the conversation at the time, but I felt out of place some way, and so, going to another part of the mill, I watched the sifting of the flour through the snowy bolter, listening to the rumbling of the wheel. When I looked around I perceived that Oliver had taken my place on the meal-bag, and that he had put his arm around the waist of aunt Carry in a way I did not much like.

Great sorrow, like a storm, sweeps us aside from ordinary feelings, and we give our hearts into kindly hands—so cold and hollow and meaningless seem the formulæ of the world. They had probably never spoken of love before, and now talked of it as calmly as they would have talked of any thing else; but they felt that hope was hopeless; at best, any union was deferred, perhaps, for long years; the future was full of uncertainties. At last their tones became very low, so low I could not hear what they said; but I saw that they looked very sorrowful, and that aunt Carry's hand lay in that of Oliver as though he were her brother.

“Why don't the flour come through?” I said, for the sifting had become thinner and lighter, and at length quite ceased. Oliver smiled, faintly, as he arose, and saying, “This will never buy the child a frock,” poured a sack of wheat into the hopper, so that it nearly run over. Seeing no child but myself, I supposed he meant to buy me a new frock, and at once resolved to put it in my little bureau, if he did.

“We have bothered Mr. Hillhouse long enough,” said aunt Carry, taking my hand, “and will go to the house, shall we not?”

I wondered why she said “Mr. Hillhouse,” for I had never heard her say so before; and Oliver seemed to wonder, too, for he said reproachfully, laying particular stress on his own name, “You don't bother Mr. Hillhouse, I am sure, but I must not insist on your remaining if you wish to go.”

“I don't want you to insist on my staying,” said aunt Carry, “if you don't want to, and I see you don't,” and lifting me out to the sloping plank, that bent beneath us, we descended.

“Carry,” called a voice behind us; but she neither answered nor looked back, but seemed to feel a sudden and expressive

fondness for me, took me up in her arms, though I was almost too heavy for her to lift, and kissing me over and over, said I was light as a feather, at which she laughed as though neither sorrowful nor lacking for employment.

This little passage I could never precisely explain, aside from the ground that "the course of true love never did run smooth." Half an hour after we returned to the house, Oliver presented himself at the door, saying, "Miss Caroline, shall I trouble you for a cup, to get a drink of water?" Carry accompanied him to the well, where they lingered some time, and when she returned her face was sunshiny and cheerful as usual.

The day went slowly by, dinner was prepared, and removed, scarcely tasted; aunt Carry wrought at her fringe, and grandmother moved softly about, preparing teas and cordials.

Towards sunset the sick man became easy, and expressed a wish that the door of his chamber might be opened, that he might watch our occupations and hear our talk. It was done accordingly, and he was left alone. My mother smiled, saying she hoped he might yet get well, but my father shook his head mournfully, and answered, "He wishes to go without our knowledge." He made amplest provision for his family always, and I believe had a kind nature, but he manifested no little fondnesses, nor did he wish caresses for himself. Contrary to the general tenor of his character, was a love of quiet jests, that remained to the last. Once, as Carry gave him some drink, he said, "You know my wishes about your future, I expect you to be mindful."

I stole to the door of his room in the hope that he would say something to me, but he did not, and I went nearer, close to the bed, and timidly took his hand in mine; how damp and cold it felt! yet he spoke not, and climbing upon the chair, I put back his thin locks, and kissed his forehead. "Child, you trouble me," he said, and these were the last words he ever spoke to me.

The sun sunk lower and lower, throwing a beam of light through the little window, quite across the carpet, and now it reached the sick man's room, climbed over the bed and up the wall; he turned his face away, and seemed to watch its glim-

mer upon the ceiling. The atmosphere grew dense and dusky, but without clouds, and the orange light changed to a dull lurid red, and the dying and dead leaves dropt silently to the ground, for there was no wind, and the fowls flew into the trees, and the gray moths came from beneath the bushes and fluttered in the waning light. From the hollow tree by the mill came the bat, wheeling and flitting blindly about, and once or twice its wings struck the window of the sick man's chamber. The last sunlight faded off at length, and the rumbling of the mill-wheel was still: he had fallen asleep in listening to its music.

The next day came the funeral. What a desolate time it was! All down the lane were wagons and carriages and horses, for every body that knew my grandfather would pay him the last honors he could receive in the world. "We can do him no further good," they said, "but it seemed right that we should come." Close by the gate waited the little brown wagon to bear the coffin to the grave, the wagon in which he was used to ride while living. The heads of the horses were drooping, and I thought they looked consciously sad.

The day was mild, and the doors and windows of the old house stood all open, so that the people without could hear the words of the preacher. I remember nothing he said; I remember of hearing my mother sob, and of seeing my grandmother with her face buried in her hands, and of seeing aunt Carry sitting erect, her face pale but tearless, and Oliver near her, with his hands folded across his breast save once or twice, when he lifted them to brush away tears.

I did not cry, save from a frightened and strange feeling, but kept wishing that we were not so near the dead, and that it were another day. I tried to push the reality away with thoughts of pleasant things—in vain. I remember the hymn, and the very air in which it was sung.

"Ye fearful souls fresh courage take,
 The clouds ye so much dread,
 Are big with mercy, and shall break
 In blessings on your head.
 Blind unbelief is sure to err,
 And scan his works in vain;
 God is his own interpreter,
 And he will make it plain."

Near the door blue flagstones were laid, bordered with a row of shrubberies and trees, with lilacs, and roses, and pears, and peach-trees, which my grandfather had planted long ago, and here, in the open air, the coffin was placed, and the white cloth removed, and folded over the lid. I remember how it shook and trembled as the gust came moaning from the woods, and died off over the next hill, and that two or three withered leaves fell on the face of the dead, which Oliver gently removed, and brushed aside a yellow-winged butterfly that hovered near.

The friends hung over the unsmiling corpse till they were led weeping and one by one away; the hand of some one rested for a moment on the forehead, and then the white cloth was replaced, and the lid screwed down. The coffin was placed in the brown wagon, with a sheet folded about it, and the long train moved slowly to the burial-ground woods, where the words "dust to dust" were followed by the rattling of the earth, and the sunset light fell there a moment, and the dead leaves blew across the smoothly shapen mound.

When the will was read, Oliver found himself heir to a fortune—the mill and the homestead and half the farm—provided he married Carry, which he must have done, for though I do not remember the wedding, I have had an aunt Caroline Hillhouse almost as long as I can remember. The lunatic sister was sent to an asylum, where she sung songs about a faithless lover till death took her up and opened her eyes in heaven. The mother was brought home, and she and my grandmother lived at their ease, and sat in the corner, and told stories of ghosts, and witches, and marriages, and deaths, for long years. Peace to their memories! for they have both gone home; and the lame brother is teaching school, in his leisure playing the flute, and reading Shakspeare—all the book he reads.

Years have come and swept me away from my childhood, from its innocence and blessed unconsciousness of the dark, but often comes back the memory of its first sorrow!

Death is less terrible to me now.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

THE ground-work of life is generally in shadow; the light glimmers for a little while, here and there, and fades off—for that the lips we love smile for us no longer, or settle into that still and placid and fearful smile that no kiss of ours can deepen; the lids grow weary and droop over the eyes whence fell our sunshine; and so, as the years pass, the darkness is more dense and full of melancholy. The blooms drop out of the thorn-tree and leave it unsightly and bare; the bubbling spring that lay cool under its white flowers, shrinks away more and more, leaving but slimy bubbles, and dries up; the hills we saw in the luxuriant beauty of their summer wealth grow dreary with the furrows of graves. Life, indeed, is a solemnity and a mystery, full of anxieties and sufferings, restlessness and weariness; but it gathers strength amid night and desolation, and receives that fullness of its beauty, with which it is adorned for going through the golden gates, in a baptism of fire. Pilgrim! have courage, for the promise of rest brightens like a chaplet full of dew, and the withered staff, as the fair towers are approached, breaks into blossoms; and, maiden, heavy with the anguish of disappointed hopes! gather from your pallid cheeks the fallen locks, and wait till the morning; weary and worn and disconsolate! be patient, and calm, and hopeful, wait till the morning—for as a child, frightened at the dark, falls tearfully asleep, and wakes in his mother's arms, are we all—living, and dying, and waking. Wait till the morning!

It is a great thing to have this hope shining with the steadfast beauty of a star, away above us and before us—this hope

of waking in immortality, of laying off all weariness, and of being in purity and truthfulness as children. But ever and aside from this, there are other, and earthly hopes, brightly dear to us. Who, in the sorrowful household of humanity, so lost in the wild crying of his own heart, or so closed about in the chill folds of dumb and helpless apathy, that he has not sometimes risen, equal to the hardest trial, and dashed from him the power and the presence of evil, as a strong swimmer the audacious waves!

Among the lights which lie among the shadows of life, the brightest is love, and the love of little children, perhaps, has the sweetest shine of all. Of such love I am thinking to-day, or rather of one such, for it is not of many but of one that I muse—one being, whose life now is only a beautiful memory, for long years the dismal autumn rains have beaten down the blossoms on her grave. We were little girls together—

She was the fairer in the face,

and death chose her for her beauty. Her cheek was colorless, her eyes large and dark, and her lips smiling, though very faintly always, for she was never mirthful, and never angry; and this last it is which makes her memory ever a reproach to me. I knew not how great my love was till she was gone; but the edges of the grave are steep, and it is not enough to lift her from the darkness that the arms of my penitence may fold her as I take her kiss of forgiveness on my forehead for a crown.

It is June now, and all day the birds sing to her their artless songs. But the window of her narrow house is covered thick with dust, and she does not hear. The white violets fringe the green coverlid that is over her, but her little hands are not unfolded to gather them any more; and when morning slants rosily over her, saying, Wake! it is day! she does not start, but with the golden curls dropping over her still pillow, sleeps on just the same. In the morning of the resurrection she will wake; and Thou who, ere the thorns were put off from thy forehead for the glory, didst take little children in thy arms and bless them, make her

thine, for in the world she had the beauty thou hast given to thine angels.

She was seven, and I ten, and I chose for my constant play-mate one two years older than myself, instead of her. She was gentle and patient, and I wayward and petulant; and though I loved her, I sometimes vexed and thwarted her. I atoned, as I fancied, though I now think it was poor atonement, by making her wreaths of wild flowers or new dresses for her doll. When I did so, she never failed to receive them just as kindly as though I had never been ungenerous or ungentle.

As I said, I was three years older than she; and though I had a thousand wild freaks which her quiet nature never imagined, I thought her quite too much of a child to be my companion, and my chief sin was in stealing away from her when I knew she wished to be with me. Sometimes, indeed, my chosen friend and I would persuade her to stay at home when we proposed a ramble in the woods or a visit to some favorite haunt, with the promise that she should go another time, or that we would bring her nuts or berries or orchard blossoms, or whatever chanced to be in season. When we condescended to do this, she almost always remained behind, reluctantly we knew, but without opposing her will to ours. And not unfrequently we told her to go to her own little playhouse; that something pretty was there; or that some one called her within doors; and under such false pretences stole away to our pleasures.

One morning, how well I remember the time! it was late in November, the woods were all dreary and withered, the huskers were in the corn-fields gathering the yellow ears and cutting the stalks, in preparation for the plough, and we could see the teams of oxen and horses standing patiently here and there, and hear the rattling, as the full baskets were emptied one after another, and the barking of the dogs, that, trailing among weeds and stubble, now startled a wild bird and now a rabbit, with the halloo and the whistle that set them on. The day was mild for the time, and the blue haze hung along the edges of the horizon. The butterflies, blue, and speckled, and yellow, that had hovered over the streams all the late summer, were gone, and

the waters, stagnant and drying away; but for this we did not care—we were going to gather pebbles.

We had made several unsuccessful attempts to get away from little Jule, for so we called her. She was not well that morning, and felt more dependent than usual. Children are not easily deceived; and though once, when she saw us flying down the green lane, and called after us to stop, we ran back, saying we were only trying to see how fast we *could* run, she seemed still suspicious; and when we sat down, as though we had no intention of stirring all the day, she hung about our chairs, and wanted us to tell her stories, or to make her something pretty, or go with her somewhere. At last my patience was exhausted, and I said, angrily, "If I were you, I would not stay where I was not wanted!"

She hung down her head. I saw my advantage, and continued, though a little softened, "Go to your playhouse and play, that's a dear girl."

"No, no," said Jule; "I want to stay here."

"You want to stay here, do you? Well, stay, we are going to the woods."

This I said in a most unamiable manner—one that brought tears to her eyes—as she said, "I want to go with you."

"I thought you said you wanted to stay here, and now you want to go."

I knew very well she but wished to do whatever should be done by us, and so added, "If you want to go to the woods, why go, and we will stay at home."

She sat down in her little unpainted chair, and confusedly pulled the curl out of her long yellow hair.

"You are going to stay here?" I said, and with bonnets hidden under our aprons, that no one might suspect our intention, we left the house. We had not gone far, when, looking round to assure ourselves that our flight was undiscovered—for we had not asked permission to go—we saw little Jule following. We ran fast at first, but she almost as fast as we, and so pausing till she came near, we intimidated her by saying we were going past the corn-field where the dogs were; that there might be twenty, for aught we knew; in fact, we expected there were,

and it was likely, too, they would come after us and bite us. We could run faster than she, and get out of reach, and if they caught her, we could not help it: she had warning.

Her lip trembled, and without wiping away the tears that gathered to her eyes, or crying audibly, she crossed her hands before her, and, looking at us reproachfully, suffered us to go on alone. At first we did so in high glee, but presently conscience smote me, and, looking back, I saw her standing just where I had left her. I was half disposed to call her to come with us. If I had, how many pang^s it would have saved me! but the evil spirit prevailed, and we went on.

There are acts, little and trifling in themselves, which have, nevertheless, power to haunt us forever; and, like the serpent in Eden,

“We cannot climb a ring’s length against the curse.”

When the fruit we deemed sweetest in gathering turns to ashes on our lips, the cells of Hybla are filled for us in vain.

Perhaps the childish misdemeanor I have recorded may, in the mind of the reader, lift the shroud from some pale unconscious faces, making a dim and shadowy array between him and the light. Fasting, nor prayer, nor penitence, nor scourge, may ever wholly lay the ghosts of bad actions. When we least expect them, they open the doors of our most secret chambers, and come in.

There were still a few withered flowers on shrunken and black stalks in the fields. The grass along the streams was matted and gray; the ripe nuts covered all the ground, and the squirrels were gathering their winter hoards. Drifts of dead leaves went cloud-like before the winds, and we pleased ourselves with hiding in their folds, or gathering them in our arms, and tossing them wildly upon the sweeping currents of the air.

Then we walked up and down the brooks that only here and there rippled among the blue stones, which we turned and overturned, in search of curious pebbles. After this we peeled great mats of green and yellow mosses from the roots of trees and decaying logs, partly because they were pretty, and partly as a carpet for the playhouse of Jule, whom, alone and unhappy,

we could not keep quite out of our thoughts, especially as the day grew towards its close.

The sun was low in the west when, with our aprons filled with moss and pebbles and other such treasures, tired and hungry, we set out for home. The cattle from the meadows had preceded us, and the corn-gatherers, with their oxen and dogs, were all gone. One narrow strip of fiery cloud hung over the west, but it faded and faded as we went on, unveiling immediately beneath it, just as we arrived at home, one star, looking very cold and large, and far away.

We fitted the moss nicely together on the floor of Julia's playhouse, in alternate parts of green and yellow, as an agreeable surprise for her, before noticing that in the chamber where we slept a light was burning—which interested us; but our curiosity was heightened into positive fear, when through the little square window from which the white muslin curtain was blown aside we saw a strange woman, who, in a very snowy cap, seemed to be bending over the bed. Julia, we knew, was not well in the morning, and we felt at once the truth—she was now very ill.

There was a great deal of going in and out of her chamber—softly, very softly; a little talk, in low tones, and an unpleasant odor of medicine all over the house. It was some time before we could be persuaded to go and see her; but at last, stricken and ashamed, we stood by her bedside. I remember how her face was burning, under her curls, but she smiled sweetly, and reaching out her arms to embrace us, said, "I am so glad you are come, for the dogs you told me of made me afraid." Her arms were hot about my neck, as she asked me if I would take her next time. I readily promised to do so when she should be well, and told her about the moss we had brought, and of a thousand things I would do for her when she recovered.

Every day she grew worse, and scarcely would anything keep me from the room a single moment. I had learned what death was, when my grandfather died; the scenes at the old home by the mill haunted me; I was afraid. I could not eat, nor sleep, nor rest. Her disease was a fever, very malignant;

and, with continual bending over her, and with exhaustion, I became infected, and was forced away from her. The last words she ever said to me were, "When I get well, and you get well, you will take me with you; won't you?" I remember only faintly, for I know not who it was, of some one coming to my bedside in the night time, and touching me softly and startingly, telling me she was dead. After an interval of a day or two, they brought the coffin. Perfectly I remember how she looked. She was smiling, as she smiled in life, and her hands were crossed on her bosom, just as I had seen them a thousand times.

The spring had come back ere I went to the woods again—for violets to plant about her grave. Often I looked to the spot where I had left her alone in her childish sorrow, but she was not there. What would I not have given to unsay those harsh words—what would I not give now!

Years have gone by, and the grave about which I planted the violets is a long way from me now; but I think of it often, and never without a shadow falling over my heart. Her life was short, but she died while splendor was in the morning clouds, but I, lingering on till the noon is past, have felt all the day's heat and burden. Away in the distance lies her brief existence, bordering my own, like a beam of beautiful light; but from her grave stretches a shadow that would reach me in the uttermost parts of the world.

THE STRANGE LADY.

IN a quiet little valley, scooped among the river hills, where there was always a murmur and always mist, creeping over the turf, and reaching softly from bough to bough, sometimes darkened with shadows, and sometimes streaky with sunlight, stands a desolate and ruinous cabin, where once dwelt a person, called by her neighbors, the strange lady; by herself, Mrs. Clifford. All the summer the grass in this pretty scene was nearly covered with flowers—king-cups, and red anemones, and pale daisies—while the hedge of sassafras, that ran up the slopes, shook with the melody of a thousand birds, especially when the rosy twilight of morning faded into the clear light of day.

A little way from the cabin door, by a wall of gray stone, where the morning-glory hung blue-bells in the sunshine and the wild rose climbed and blossomed, a spring of bright clear water washed over its mossy rim, and rippled like a skein of silver down until it lost itself in deeper and darker waves.

The valley seems less beautiful now; for though nature is lovely always, humanity gives it a deeper charm, lost, fallen, and ruined as it is. There is a moaning and a wailing in the deep bosom of the earth, that were not there when the wings of the angels cleft open the golden clouds which hung between the lower and the upper heaven, ere, with but the ruins of immortality, the sinful ones went out from Paradise, waking, with their slightest footsteps, the awful echoes of the grave. Sin, sin! the world because of thee is darkened from her early glory, and in all her beautiful borders there are hearts that can only lay their great burdens aside on the starry threshold of eternity.

Whether the shadow of previous transgression, I know not,

but very evidently some mystery hung over the history of Mrs. Clifford. She came to live in the cabin, no one knew whence, clad in the deepest mourning, and seemingly with no light in her heart but that which went from the face of her cherub boy, just beginning to smile back to the smile of his fair but desolate mother. Her furniture was comprised in a few simple articles, such as suited so humble a home: a bed, a few chairs and a table, a little crockery and a cradle, making all except a shelf of books—some of them old and worn, and some glittering in gold and velvet. In the former was written, in a light, graceful hand, "Mary Wilford," and in the latter, in heavier and firmer characters, "To Mary, from L. C."

Often, in the pleasant weather, the pale lady might be seen sitting in the shadow of the elm that grew close by her door and trailed its lithe boughs against the eaves—whereon the milk-white doves sunned their plumage as the day went down, and about which the steel-blue swallows circled and twittered very tamely; often, with her book, and him whose electric touches not unfrequently drew her attention quite away from its pages, she sat there, hour after hour, till the shining beams that burnt through the tree-tops went down, and the star of love stood blushing on the threshold of the night. Then, retiring within doors, as the laughter and gay pranking of the little one were hushed, she would sing fragments of songs, in a voice sweet and low, but always deeply pensive, till the dimpled little hands were folded in sleep.

There was seldom any light in her cabin. In summer the moonlight streamed pale and cold through the open door, and the bat flitted in and out as it would, and the owl complained from the elm to the winds, that stopped not for its song of sorrow, but kept running to and fro—now laughing among the thick leaves, and now crying dismally from the tops of the hills. In winter the embers only threw a faint glow over the little window, darkened with the matted vines of creepers and sweet-brier, that, interwoven, clambered over the cabin side, unpruned and untrained.

For a time there were many rumors and surmises about the strange lady; but gradually they died away. The visits of the

neighbors, whether prompted by kindness or curiosity, were at length discontinued; for, though they were received in a manner singularly sweet and gentle, they were never returned; and, finally, her seclusion was only broken by the old woman who carried milk to her. She, however, declared that the strange lady had always a kind word for her, and that a glimpse of the "little darling" made her happier all day.

As the child grew older, he was often seen toddling about in a simple slip and straw hat, with his hands full of dandelions and daisies, while his mother sat under the elm, frequently looking from her volume to see that he strayed not too far; for the child seemed to love solitude even more than the mother. And, as years went by, he would sit alone, watching the dancing of the motes in the sunshine, and the circling and wheeling of the swallows about the cabin roof. He loved the clouds and the mists best of all things, and stole often to the nooks least haunted with birds, most shut from the sunshine. He had his mother's melancholy in his deep eyes; even his smile was sad, whether from predisposition, or from habit and association, I cannot tell. He cared little for books, and his mother, to whose lightest wish he was accustomed to yield, could only with difficulty persuade him to learn to read.

Requiring less of her care and attention as he grew, the golden threads which had for a time woven themselves through the web of her life, faded out; the songs that used to lull the baby to sleep were forgotten; the favorite volumes had no longer any charm, and lay in her lap unopened all the day. She came forth to the elm shadow less frequently, and with a fainter step. A little in the future, time was turning the dark furrow of that valley, where the weary have their rest.

Nine years had gone by since Mrs. Clifford came to the cabin, and her child scarcely knew that beyond the dark hem of hills and woods that girdled his world there was another and a harsher one.

The swallows were gone, the leaves on the elm-tree were yellow, and dropping silently, one by one, to the ground—it was the middle of autumn. All day the young lad had been in the woods, listening to the dropping of the nuts, and the dull

moaning of the winds, as they covered the flowers with dead leaves. Gray, heavy clouds spread over all the face of heaven, and, at the fall of night, the rain began to patter on the roof, in pleasant and mournful music. The child returned from his deeper isolation, sat under the tree, bright drops occasionally lodging in his golden curls, or plashing on his cheek. He was wondering whether the stars were swept from the sky, or whether, beyond the storm, they burned brightly on.

“My child, my child, will you not come to me?” called the low voice of his mother, more lowly and sorrowfully than it had ever called before. In a moment he was by her side; and with her thin, cold fingers, she parted the bright curls that the winds had blown about his forehead, and kissed him many times, before she said, “I am going a long journey very soon—it may be to-night—and shall never come back to you any more. I am weary and worn, and am going where they never say, I am sick. The good Father will put his arms about you, if you love him, when mine embrace you no longer.” She sank back on her pillow, and was still, though her eyes turned not from the child, hanging over her like a young bough stricken suddenly into stone. Scarcely knew he what the mystery was of which she spoke, but he shuddered with the instinctive dread which all feel when death is very near. The darkness had never seemed so terrible; and, as the dead vines creaked against the window, and the storm beat against the roof, he was afraid. “Mother!” he called, at first softly, then louder, and more loud, but she did not answer. He put his hands on her forehead, and it felt cold and damp. He kissed her lips; and, when she returned not his kisses, he knew she was dead.

As childhood will, he tried to push the awful reality away. He thought of the dropping nuts, of the white mists that curtained the hills, and of sunshine and the birds. Suddenly he remembered a nest that, in the spring, was under the gloomy arch of an old bridge, near the woodland, where every day he went to watch the growth of the nestlings, but one bright afternoon he had found they were gone, and the empty nest half crumbled away. Returning mournfully home, he stopped under a tree, from which, with the fluttering among the boughs, a

shower of bright blossoms rained in his face, followed by a gush of delicious music, and, looking up, he saw his lost birds. When he had told this story to his mother, he remembered that she said, "We go thus from the dark arches of sorrow, when our mortal habitations fell away, to sing among the flowers of the trees of Paradise forever and ever." And with this sacred recollection he fell asleep. And so—one to awake and take upon her brows the crown of immortality, and one the thorny crown of earthly sorrow—they slept.

There were not so many at the funeral as came to my grandfather's, and young Clifford had no home any more; yet He who "giveth sleep to his beloved" holds an invisible shield over their children, and the strange lady, living alone and silent long, had filled the neighborhood with a mystical sweet affection for her child. He is a man now, and his breast is bossed all over with hearts.

THE PRIDE OF SARAH WORTHINGTON.

I took up one of the papers published in the city which is nearest to Clovernook, and turning, as is the habit of women, to that part which chronicles the main points in all domestic histories, I read, that Sarah Worthington was dead; "after a painful illness, aged nineteen years, three months, and eleven days." I read it more than once, to satisfy all questionings of my unwilling heart; but there could be no error; the street, the incidental revelations of the stricken family, every thing confirmed the first impression that had stolen through my eyes to my shrinking consciousness. The old truth was again asserted by some friend, in the often repeated verse which followed, that

"The good die young,
While they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket."

How like a peal of thunder awakening us from some pleasant dream, when the dashing of the rain at the window, the howling of the tempest on the hill, and the blank darkness about us, take the place of the soft voice that was in our ears, and the smile that warmed our hearts, leaving us for a moment startled and bewildered, comes intelligence of the death of a friend, whom we left a few weeks, or it may be a few days ago, in the enjoyment of vigorous health.

After the first burst of surprise and sorrow, we fall into a train of melancholy musing—when, and under what circumstances was our last meeting with the dead—what did she say, and how did she look? was it morning or evening? and was

our language and manner kind, or reserved and formal? How many instances we recall in which kind words might have been said that were not said, or kind actions performed that were not performed! If it be a near relation who is gone, how much of harshness and coldness and indifference we have to reproach ourselves for, and how we are tortured with exaggerations of our short comings, and idle regrets.

Who of us all cannot remember some pale lips from which we would give all the world to hear the blessed words, "You are forgiven." For myself, there is one darker memory than all the rest—one, perpetually recurring, and from which I shrink away, afraid to think. Mountains, and woods, and waters, darken between me and the solitary grave of one who was my dearest friend, yet against whom I sinned—not with any premeditated wrong—but from childish ignorance and sudden passion. My lost one! if your dying hands had been laid upon my head in forgiveness as well as in blessing, my irrepressible grief might long ago have been stilled—that blessing, meant for innocency, falling upon guilt, has been my curse.

All the long summer time I knew that she was dying, yet I put off the day of confession. Now she would be better and talk of the future, and, accustomed to rely on all she said, I would grow hopeful, and in its brightening the dreadful error was almost forgot; and when she grew too weak to take me in her arms, as she had always done before, and lay all the day looking from the open window at the clouds and the grass, and I knew instinctively that she must leave us before long, I was more than ever afraid to speak. I could not embitter her sufferings with a knowledge of my early injustice. Sometimes my sisters would go away from her chamber for an hour, or even for a day, for youth is apt to be inconsiderate; but I was there always, bringing the cup of water, wrapping doubly the chilly hands and feet, or smoothing the counterpane. A strong fascination would not allow me to leave, but when she praised my devotion I would go aside and weep.

So the time went on, and I said not, I have done wrong, I have sinned against you, sweet friend, and against heaven; till at last the dull shadows of autumn swept across the face of the

summer, and my watching was all done, and the smile which they said was so life-like and loving looked reproachful to me.

At night, I am lifted to "the litter of close-curtained sleep" by the phantoms that come up from the grave; waking, in the morning, I go down under the long years, full of pains and sorrows and disappointments, and folding back the shroud, cry out to the dust for forgiveness. In vain! There is no green hollow in the wilderness, no blank sands of the desert, that to me would not be haunted. God, will the tormentor cross the threshold of the grave, clouding the pure radiance of eternity with the curse that has spread mildew along the summer of my mortal existence! Shall the ashes of life's roses never be taken from my head, nor the sackcloth unbound from my bosom?

But I meant not this digression—I know not that she of whom my little story chiefly is, she who has gone down to death and up to judgment before me, may plead against me anything at all. I mean by this no argument for the better actions of my riper years. I have perhaps learned to check impatience of temper and impetuosity of speech, but I fear I am farther off from heaven now than when I used to think the slender tree-tops close against the skies.

"The moonlight stealing o'er the scene
Was blended with the gifts of eve."

It was the midst of the harvest—the fragrance of the newly cut hay made all the air delicious, for the sythe had been busy all day in the wide meadows, and along their flat smooth surfaces, and up and down the hills, lay the straight, thick swaths—paths for the starlight and beds for the tired winds, for the stars were peeping, one after another, above the edges of the tree-tops, and the airs, scarcely awake, gave no murmur to the thick and dusty foliage.

Resting on the summit of the eastern hill stood the full moon, looking very large, and so pale that "the man with the bag of thorns" was distinctly visible, else my juvenile employment—for we were playing Hide and Seek—made my childish fancy more sharp in apprehension than it was wont to be.

Let me see—there were half a dozen of us: Ward, my little nephew, nine years old then; Robert, a distant cousin, a young man of unusual beauty of character; Sarah Worthington, and Ellie, and Hal, and I. A merry party we were, and our laughter called up the echoes from the high hills away across the orchard and the pasture field and the thick woods. Little green stacks were heaped all about the yard; how sweet they made the air, and what nice hiding places they were, especially where the shadows of the peach trees fell darkly over and about them. Ward enjoyed the frolic vastly, though he felt that he was caught less often than cousin Robert. It seems to me but yesterday, so fresh is it all in my memory—memory, that sometimes is so good an angel. Down in the past are scattered fountains, sealed with dark rocks almost always, from which it is sweet to drink. The game of hide and seek, the time, the place, our abandonment of care, and our taking up for a moment childish actions, and in part, childish feelings, are pleasant to those who have come up into the noon of the world. New grave-mounds, the grass creeping over one, and the other fresh and new, darken to-day between me and that time. Away in the west stands an old ruinous church; I have seen it once or twice, and it is one of those things which, once seen, are never forgotten. It has stood there a long time, for I can remember it was in little better state of preservation than now as long ago as I can remember. The oaks and walnuts that grow there throw shadows over the graves of the pioneers, whose piety prompted the rude skill, that, earlier than the Revolution,

“Hewed the shaft and laid the architrave,”

for the temple about which they are sleeping. The living have almost deserted it now; the swallows go in at the broken windows and build their nests where they will; the thousand nails in the strong double door are rusty and black; the woodwork, never painted, discolored by time to a sort of pearly gray; the weatherboards, in places decaying and dropping off. There was never belfry nor spire, and the steep mossy roof retains still one or two of those angular projections of framework, which are only seen on very old houses in the country—placed there

probably for the convenience of the builders. Once in a long time some itinerant preacher—some wilderness-crying John, girt about with zeal, pauses in the village for a Sabbath, and the children of the house, where for a time he abides, bear to all the neighbors—all persons living within a circuit of four or five miles—the intelligence, that at eleven o'clock on Sunday there will be a sermon in the old church. At the appointed time the congregation gather, slow and calm. But Robert is not there. Nor loud denunciation, nor soft admonition, nor trembling hymn, provokes the sleeping dust.

And the lady of his love, she, who took off the white bridal crown for the muffling mourning veil, does she go apart and on the simple headstone read his name, the shelter of whose love death has broken away? I know not—nor is it well perhaps to pause and inquire.

Full of health and hope he was, the night of our gamesome frolic in the moonlight. He had passed the twilight with one dearer than any of us, and was in genial mood, for in loving one we learn to love all. Scarcely could any of us get home to the doorsteps, from our retreats under the lilacs or behind the stacks of hay, without being caught, and paying the penalty prescribed by the childish law. Even Sarah, usually so stately, unbent from her dignity that night, and, when Robert was to be overtaken, ran more nimbly than when he was to be the pursuer. She was a beautiful girl, and I have called her stately, dignified, but she was also silent, unsocial, selfish. I think there was nothing in the world she loved, unless it were her little dog—to this she was always kind, giving it all the caresses and endearing words she had for anything. Mother nor brother nor any human being seemed ever to have found the way to her heart, and she spoke of her kindred with more than the indifference she gave the veriest stranger. Sometimes she would put her arms about me, and seem to love me, but the warm gush of feeling, if, for the moment, it really were such, would be in a moment put down with an iron will, and between us there was a sea of ice.

For a long time I marvelled whether the milk which is naturally in human nature had been thinned by some untimely

frost, or whether it had always been as now. She spoke of no past season of sunshine, of no future hope, and to the present, a stock or a stone was not more indifferent. Little children that may scarcely plead in vain to any one for love, were thrown upon her care in vain. What they really required she performed, indeed, but lower than duty there was no softer feeling.

I would have solved the problem of her nature. I could never learn that she even felt pride in anything, unless perhaps in the scorn she bestowed on her fellow creatures.

Her hair, thick and luxuriant, and black as night, hung, when she loosened it from the braids in which it was commonly confined, and shook it over her shoulders, as she often did, almost to her feet. With what a queen-like manner I have seen her toss the dark masses from her forehead, and folding her arms across her bosom, pace backward and forward through her chamber, with no word, but, as if musing on the destruction of empires, scaring away, often until after midnight,

“ Magic sleep, that comfortable bird.”

One night I remember well, late in December, still and intensely cold, we had been sitting an hour before the glowing grate, talking of this and that, and I perceived, silently, at the time, that Sarah had not once said during our conversation that she hated any person or thing, and it was rare that she talked without doing so. She was tall, straight as an arrow, and seemed to possess a constitution that would resist the chances and changes of many years. I speak again of her beauty, for I know not whether it was this or her indifference, for we reach for the inaccessible always, that gave her the power of fascination: all who knew her admired, many even loved her. But the heartstrings of her worshippers were ever destined to tremble with the torture of her careless hand. Of these worshippers we had been speaking that night; I, with intent of bringing out her feelings, she, because I talked to her. Amongst other things, I chanced to say, “There is one of your admirers, Sarah, whom you have not seen; to-morrow, if you will, I shall give myself the pleasure of making him known to you. Who knows but that he is destined to bear from a hundred lovers the prize?”

"It may be, indeed it's probable, very probable," she replied sarcastically, and placing her hand on her heart, added, laughingly, "I think I begin to feel susceptible—where is he? tell me this hour, this moment! I am all impatience."

"Calm yourself," I said, speaking in the same vein, "and I will tell you 'the color of his hair, and the garment he doth wear, and the day of the month he's to marry unto you,' as our spinning-girl, Sally, used to say when she charmed the moon."

"Delay is torture," she said with assumed earnestness, and suddenly throwing herself on her knees, exclaimed, "Where, O, where is this Endymion, that, like the pale Phœbus, hunting in a grove, I may stoop and kiss my sweetest?"

"You know lawyer D——," said I, meaning to interrogate.

The playfulness was gone, and standing erect, she asked in a tone I shall never forget—"Who told you I did?"

I explained briefly what I meant to say, and seating herself majestically, a little way from me, she replied sententiously and coldly, that she slightly knew him.

"Our young friend is reading with D——," I said; "we shall find him at the office in Fourth-street, when we go to town—shall we call?"

"No," was all her answer, and presently making the fire, which was growing dim, an excuse, I sought my pillow and seemed to sleep, for I felt that farther conversation would be an annoyance.

Left alone, Sarah took the comb from her hair, one of the most elaborate and expensive of the then newest style, and throwing it on the floor at her feet, shook down her black tresses, and in her thin night-dress began walking to and fro across the room. In one of the turns the comb broke beneath her tread, but she stooped not nor seemed in any way to heed it. The lamp burned low, and flickered, and went out; the ashes gathered gray over the coal, and the frost whitened on the panes, so very cold it was, but neither the darkness nor the freezing atmosphere seemed to trouble her at all. The clock had struck twelve and one and two; and dropping on her knees, before the window, she scratched away the frost, and flattening her cheek against the cold glass, looked earnestly forth

into the street. The lights were all gone from the windows, and only once in a long while sounded a step on the frozen ground below.

So still was she, and so strange had been her conduct, that I was half afraid. At last I ventured to speak, not as though I had been conscious of her manner all the night, but rather as if she were but then missed.

"Pray, don't disturb me," she said, "I am talking with the angels."

Satisfied that she was neither dead nor insane, for strange speech was habitual to her, and exhausted with the mental oppression I had endured, I fell asleep, and though I dreamed that a skeleton was in my bed with me, I did not wake till morning. When I did so, I was half buried in the heavy tresses of Sarah, who, stooping over me, bade me awake, adding, "You know we are to make that call which is perhaps to decide my destiny."

Before the appointed time arrived, however, she had framed some excuse, which I received without a question, and the visit was not made, nor then nor ever.

I have since seen D——, much and often; talked with him of life and death, and love; but of love he spoke calmly as of a client. He is forty, or nearly so, handsome, wealthy, influential, grave in manner, but of an iron will that nor hope nor fear nor hate nor love may stir from its bent. His deep blue eyes would look as coldly and steadily on dying loveliness as on the veriest wretch that ever lived and fattened, if he so resolved. He is unmarried and a universal favorite. But no matter what he is—I have solved the problem that once baffled me—

"As the waters to the marble,
So my heart fell with a moan"

as I did so. Poor Sarah! I had sometimes blamed, but I only pitied her now.

It was but this morning I read her obituary, and I cannot yet think of her as pale, or sick, or dead. What did she think of at the last? and what did she say? did her thoughts ever cross the wild mountains and search me out? Mine have gone back

to her a thousand times. As she went down step by step into those silent palaces whither we all are going, did she lean more upon the love of kindred? did she see more clearly than in life, God's purposes in the great wo about her heart? I know not, I only know that her locks will never again fall about my bosom, nor her voice call me to wake.

I know not whether she sleeps beneath a stately monument in the dark vaults, or under the swelling mound; but I know that to her pillow the mockery of no smile may come, nor to her heart the delusive sweetness of hollow and unmeaning words.

"And to sleep, you must lie down in just such a bed!"

THE WILDERMINGS.

THERE came to reside in the neighborhood a family consisting of three persons—an old lady, a young man, and a child some fourteen years of age. The place they took was divided by a little strip of woods from Clovernook, and I well remember how rejoiced I was on first seeing the blue smoke curling up from the high red chimneys; for the cottage had been a long time vacant, and the prospect of having people so near us, gave me delight. Perhaps, too, I was not the less pleased that they were to be new acquaintances. We are likely to underestimate persons and things we have continually about us; but let separation come, and we learn what they were to us. *Apropos* of this—in the little grove I have spoken of I remember there was an oak tree, taller by a great deal than its fellows; and a thousand times I have felt as though its mates must be oppressed with a painful sense of inferiority, and really wished the axe laid at its root. At last, one day, I heard the ringing strokes of that destroyer—and, on inquiry, was told that the woodman had orders no longer to spare the great oak. Eagerly I listened at first—every stroke was like the song of victory; then the gladness subsided, and I began to marvel how the woods would look with the monarch fallen; then I thought, their glory will have departed, and began to reflect on myself as having sealed the warrant of its death, so that when the crash, telling that it was fallen, woke the sleeping echoes from the hills, I cannot tell how sad a feeling it induced in my heart. If I could see it standing once more, just once more! but I could not, and till this day I feel a regretful pang when I think of that grand old tree.

But the new neighbors. Some curiosity mingled with my pleasure, and so, as soon as I thought they were settled, and feeling at home, I made my toilet with unusual care for a first call.

The cottage was a little way from the main road, and access to it was by a narrow grass-grown lane, bordered on one side by a green belt of meadow land, and on the other by the grove, sloping upward and backward to a clayey hill, where, with children and children's children about them,

“The rude forefathers of the hamlet slept.”

A little farther on, but in full view of its stunted cypresses and white headstones, was the cottage. Of burial grounds generally I have no dread, but from this particular one I was accustomed, from childhood, to turn away with something of superstitious horror. I could never forget how Laura Hastings saw a light burying there all one winter night, after the death of John Hine, a wild, roving fellow, who never did any real harm in his life to any one but himself, hastening his own death by foolish excesses. Nevertheless, his ghost had been seen more than once, sitting on the cold mound beneath which the soul's expression was fading and crumbling: so, at least, said some of the oldest and most pious inhabitants of our neighborhood. There, too, Mary Wildermings, a fair young girl who died, more sinned against than sinning, had been heard to sing sad lullabies under the waning moon sometimes, and at other times had been seen sitting by her sunken grave, and braiding roses in her hair, as for a bridal. I never saw any of these wonderful things; but a spot more likely to be haunted by the un-resting spirits of the bad could not readily be imagined. The woods, thick and full of birds, along the roadside, thinned away toward the desolate ridge, where briars grew over the mounds, and about and through the fallen fences, as they would, with here and there a little clearing among weeds and thistles and high matted grass, for the making of a new grave.

It was the twilight of a beautiful summer day, as I walked down the grassy lane and past the lonesome cemetery, to make this first call at the cottage, feeling, I scarcely knew why,

strangely sad. By an old broken bridge in the hollow, between the cottage and the field of death I remember that I sat down, and for a long time listened to the trickling of the water over the pebbles, and watched golden spots of sunlight till they quite faded out, and "came still evening on, and twilight gray, that in her sober livery all things clad."

So quietly I sat, that the mole, beginning its blind work at sunset, loosened and stirred the ground beneath my feet, and the white, thick-winged moths, coming from beneath the dusty weeds, fluttered about me, and lightened in my lap, and the dull beating of the bat came almost in my face.

The first complaint of the owl sounded along the hollow and died over the next hill, warning me to proceed, when I heard,—as it were the echo of my own thought, repeated in a low, melancholy voice—the conclusion of that beautiful stanza of the elegy in reference to that moping bird. I distinctly caught the lines—

"Of such as wandering near her sacred bower,
Molest her ancient, solitary reign."

Looking up, I saw approaching slowly, with arms folded and eyes on the ground, a young and seemingly handsome man. He passed without noticing me at all, and I think without seeing me. But I had the better opportunity of observing him, though I would have foregone that privilege to win one glance. He interested me, and I felt humiliated that he should pass me with this unkind indifference. His face was pale and very sad, and his forehead shaded with a heavy mass of black hair, pushed away from one temple, and falling neglectedly over the other.

"Well!" said I, as I watched him ascending the opposite hill, feeling very much as though he had wantonly disregarded some claim I had on him, though I could not possibly have had the slightest; and, turning ill-humoredly away, I walked with a quick step toward the cottage.

A golden-haired young girl sat in the window reading, and on my approach arose and received me with easy gracefulness and well-bred courtesy, but during my stay her manner did not once border on cordiality. She was very beautiful, but her

beauty was like that of statuary. The mother I did not see. She was, I was told, indisposed, and, on begging that she might not be disturbed, the daughter readily acquiesced. Every thing about the place indicated refinement and elegant habits, but whence the family came, how long they proposed to remain, and what relation the young man sustained to the rest, I would gladly have known.

Seeing a flute on the table, I spoke of music, for I suspected it to belong to the absent gentleman. I received no information, however; and as the twilight was already falling deeply, I felt a necessity to take leave, without obtaining even a glimpse of the person whom I had pictured in my fancy as so young and fair, and, of course so agreeable.

The sun had been set some time, but the moon had risen full and bright, so that I had no fear even in passing the graveyard, but walked more slowly than I had done before, till, reaching the gate, I paused to think of the awful mysteries of life and death.

This is not a very desolate spot after all, I thought, as, leaning over the gate, something of the quiet of the place infused itself into my spirits. Here, I felt, the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; the long train of evils that attach to the best phases of humanity, is quite forgotten; the thorn-crown is loosened from the brow of sorrow by the white hand of peace, and the hearts that were all their lifetime under the shadows of great and haply unpitied afflictions never ache any more. And here, best of all! the frailties of the unresisting tempted, are folded away beneath the shroud, from the humiliating glances of pity, and the cold eyes of pride. We have need to be thankful that when man brought on the primal glory of his nature the mildew of sin, God did not cast us utterly from him, but in the unsearchable riches of his mercy struck open the refuge of the grave. If there were no fountain where our sins of scarlet might be washed white as wool, if the black night of death were not bordered by the golden shadows of the morning of immortality, if deep in the darkness were not sunken the foundations of the white bastions of peace, it were yet an inestimable privilege to lay aside the

burden of life, for life becomes, sooner or later, a burden, and an echo among ruins.

In the corner of the burial ground, where the trees are thickest, a little apart from the rest, was the grave of Mary Wildermings, and year after year, the blue thistles bloomed and faded in its sunken sod.

The train of my reflections naturally suggested her, and, turning my eyes in the direction of her resting place, I saw, or thought I saw, the outline of a human figure. I remembered the story of her unresting ghost, and at first little doubted that I beheld it, and felt a tumult of strange emotions on finding myself thus alone near so questionable a shape.

Then, I said, this is some delusion of the senses; and I passed my hand over my eyes, for an uncertain glimmer had followed the intensity of my gaze. I looked towards the cottage to reassure myself by the light of a human habitation, but all there was dark; a cloud had passed over the moon, and, without venturing to look towards the haunted grave, I withdrew from the gate, very lightly, though it creaked as I did so. Any sound save the beating of my own heart gave me courage; and when I had walked a little way, I turned and looked again, but the dense shadow would have prevented my seeing any thing, if any thing had been there. Certain it is, I saw nothing.

On reaching home, I asked the housekeeper, a garrulous person usually, if she remembered Mary Wildermings, and what she could tell me of her burial, in the graveyard across the wood.

"Yes, I remember her, and she is buried in the corner of the ground, on the hill. They came to my house, I know, to get a cup, or something of the sort, with which to dip the water from her grave, for it rained terribly all the day of her funeral. She added, "But what do you want to talk of the dead and gone for, when there are living folks enough to talk about?"

Truth is, she wanted me to say something of our new neighbors, and was vexed that I did not, though I probably should have done so had they not been quite driven from my mind by the more absorbing event of the evening; so, as much vexed and disappointed as herself, I retired. The night was haunted

with some troublous dreams, but a day of sunshine succeeded, and my thoughts flowed back to a more pleasing channel.

Days and weeks went by, and we neither saw nor heard anything of our new neighbors, for my call was not returned, nor did I make any further overtures towards an acquaintance. But often, as I sat under the apple tree by the door, in the twilight, I heard the mellow music of the distant flute.

"Is that at the cottage?" said the housekeeper to me, one night: "it sounds to me as though it were in the corner of the graveyard."

I smiled as she turned her head a little to one side, and encircling the right ear with her hand, listened some minutes eagerly, and then proceeded to express her conviction that the music was the result of no mortal agency.

"Did you ever hear of a ghost playing the flute?" I said.

"A flute!" she answered, indignantly, "it's a flute, just as much as you are a flute; and for the sake of enlightening your blind understanding, I'll go to the graveyard, night as it is, if you will go with me."

"Very well," I said; "let us go."

So, under the faint light of the crescent moon, we took our way together. Gradually the notes became lower and sadder, and at length quite died away. I urged my trembling companion to walk faster, lest the ghost should vanish too; and she acceded to my wish with a silent alacrity, that convinced me at once of the sincerity of her expressed belief. Just as we began to ascend the hill, she stopped suddenly, saying, "There! did you hear that?"

I answered, that I heard a noise, but that it was no unusual thing to hear such sounds in an inhabited neighborhood, at so early an hour. "It was the latching of the gate at the graveyard," she answered, solemnly. "As you value your immortal soul, go no further."

In vain I argued, that a ghost would have no need to unlatch the gate. She positively refused to go farther, and with a courage not very habitual to me, I walked on alone.

"Do you think I don't know that sound?" she called after me. "I would know if I had forgotten everything else. Oh,

stop, till I tell you! The night Mary Wildermings died," I heard her say; but I knew the sound of the gate as well as she, and would not wait even for a ghost story. I have since wished I had, for I could never afterwards persuade her to proceed with it.

Gaining the summit of the hill, I saw, a little way before me, a dark figure, receding slowly; but so intent was I on the superhuman, that I paid little heed to the human; though afterward, in recalling the circumstance, the individual previously seen while I sat on the bridge became in some way associated with this one.

How hushed and solemn the graveyard seemed! I was half afraid, as I looked in—quite startled, in fact, when, latching and unlatching the gate, to determine whether the sound I had heard were that or not, a rabbit, roused from its light sleep, under the fallen grass, sped fleetly across the still mounds to the safer shelter of the woods. I saw nothing else, save that the grass was trampled to a narrow path all the way leading toward Mary's grave.

During the summer, I sometimes saw the young girl in the woods, and I noticed that she neither gathered flowers nor sang with the birds; but would sit for hours in some deep shadow, without moving her position in the least, not even to push away the light curls which the wind blew over her cheeks and forehead, as they would. She seemed neither to love nor seek human companionship. Once only I noticed, and it was the last time she ever walked in the woods, that he whom I supposed to be her brother was with her. She did not sit in the shade, as usual, but walked languidly, and leaning heavily on the arm of her attendant, who several times swept off the curls from her forehead, and bent down, as if kissing her.

A few days afterwards, being slightly indisposed, I called in the village doctor. Our conversation, naturally, was of who was sick and who was dead.

"Among my patients," he said, "there is none that interests me so deeply as a little girl at the cottage—indeed, I have scarcely thought of anything else, since I knew that she must die. A strange child," he continued; "she seems to feel nei-

ther love of life nor fear of death, nor does she either weep or smile; and though I have been with her much of late, I have never seen her sleep. She suffers no pain—her face wears the same calm expression, but her melancholy eyes are wide open all the time.”

The second evening after this, though not quite recovered myself, I called at the cottage, in the hope of being of some service to the sick girl. The snowy curtain was dropped over the window of her chamber, the sash partly raised, and all within still—very still. The door was a little way open, and, pausing, I heard from within a low, stifled moan, which I could not misunderstand, and pushing the door aside, I entered, without rapping.

In the white sheet, drawn straight over the head and the feet, I recognised at once the fearful truth—the little girl was dead. By the head of the bed, and still as one stricken into stone, sat the person I so often wished to see. The room was nearly dark, and his face was buried in his hands—nevertheless, I knew him—it was he who had passed me on the bridge.

Presently the housekeeper, or one that I took to be her, entered, and whispering to him, he arose and went out, so that I saw him but imperfectly. When he was gone, the woman folded the covering away from the face, and to my horror I saw that the eyes were still unclosed. Seeing my surprise, she said, as she folded a napkin, and pinned it close over the lids—

“It is strange, but the child would never in life close her eyes—her mother, they say, died in watching for one who never came, and the baby was watchful and sleepless from the first.”

The next day, and the next, it was dull and rainy—excitement and premature exposure had induced a return of my first indisposition, so that I was not at the funeral. I saw, however, from my window, preparations for the burial—to my surprise, in the lonesome little graveyard by the woods.

In the course of a fortnight, I prepared for a visit of condolence to the cottage, but on reaching it, found the inhabitants gone—the place still and empty.

Returning, I stopped at the haunted ground: close by the

grave of Mary Wildermings was that of the stranger child. The briars and thistles had been carefully cut away, there was no slab and no name over either, but the blue and white violets were planted thickly about both. That they slept well, was all I knew

THE MOODS OF SETH MILFORD AND HIS SISTERS.

THE mists hung red along the blue basement of the October sky, and now and then was heard the uncertain, impatient twitter of some wild bird, that lingered behind its fellows, for the last flocks had flown over the hills and faded off in the distance, like clouds. The woods, not yet withered from their autumn splendor, were beautiful exceedingly. The winds, crying for the lost summer, ran along the tops of the long reaches of maples, breaking their shivering wilderness of leaves into golden furrows—low hedges of the red, glossy-leaved gum trees, ran in among the forks of the hills, and the brown, shaggy vines of the wild grape, full of black clusters, clambered about the sasafra and elm, and the oak still towered in green magnificence.

The sun grew larger and larger, and went down, and gradually the evening fell, with its solemn calm, over all the scene. Evening, in autumn!

To most minds, the autumn is a melancholy time, sweeping off the light and beauty from the summer, and leaving the world, like Eden when the Fall swept thence the light, and the dews of sorrow blotted out the footsteps of the angels.

In a stubble field, high and flat, bordered on two sides with thick woods, on one by an open meadow, from which, just now, the cows were wending their way slowly homeward, and on the other, commanding a view of the homestead and the road, Seth Milford was ploughing.

The air was all fragrant with the smell of fresh earth, as furrow after furrow crumbled off, and the weary and jaded horses

steadily walked backward and forward across the field, in obedience to the hand of their master.

Twilight fell deeper and darker, and the silver ring of the new moon was seen just over the western tree-tops, when Seth paused at the edge of the field nearest the house, drew the plough from the furrow on to the narrow border of grass that edged the stubble, loosened the traces, and winding the long rein about the slender and glossy neck of one of his horses, lowered the bars, and the animals walked slowly homeward alone.

With arms folded across his bosom, and eyes bent on the ground, the young ploughman remained for some time listlessly leaning against the fence; and it was not until his good steeds, having reached the next bars and found themselves unable to proceed further, had once or twice neighed impatiently, that his reverie, whatever its nature, was interrupted. Drawing his rough boots backward and forward over the long and fallen grass, by way of cleansing them of the moist earth that attached to them in the furrows, he refolded his arms, lowered his hat a little over his sullen brow, and was proceeding slowly and mechanically homeward, when he was interrupted with the brisk, lively salutation of "How are you, Seth?" He looked up, and a smile, half sorrowful, half disdainful, passed across his regularly handsome features, as though he scarcely knew whether most to pity or despise any one who could be happy in this world. The recipient of this dubious greeting was a young neighboring farmer, with a round, rosy face, indicative of good nature and good health, and large gray eyes, and the beginnings of a yellowish beard. Cordially shaking the hand of his unsocial neighbor, he apologized, a little bluntly, for crossing without liberty his fields; for it must be owned, that Seth Milford had, either justly or unjustly, obtained the reputation of being a little selfish and particular as to who trespassed on his premises. The young man was evidently arrayed in his best; and whether the fashion of his garments was such as obtained in the gay world or not, mattered to him very little. He was going, he said, the distance of a mile or so, to "sit up with a corpse," and the direction he had taken materially shortened the way.

“Who is dead?” inquired Seth, manifesting for the first time a little interest. “Humph!” he continued, on learning who it was; “he was a young man—must have been younger than I—and yet has been so blest as to die.”

“Yes,” said the happy farmer, without understanding or apparently heeding the conclusion of the remark; “yes, he was young; if he had lived till the twenty-second of January, he would have been his own man. Good evening.”

Seth looked after the young watcher, and repeated, half aloud, as he turned homeward,—

“Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the world, and all our woes.”

It seems, sometimes, as if we were but drifted here and there, by blind chances, to perish, at last, like the flowers; and this especially seems true, when, after striving earnestly but vainly to pierce the darkness which lies between the farthest stretch of imagination, and the eternal brightness about God, our thoughts come back to our poor mortal being. Else it seems that we were predestined from eternity to fill a certain round, from which there is no escape; and, sick at heart, we turn from each lofty endeavor. We have too little of the child’s faith—too little of simple and trustful reliance on “our Father.”

“The good are never fatalists—
The bad alone act by necessity,”

the poet says. There are some, however, not bad, who, partly owing to an unhealthy temperament—moody and morbid—and partly to the continually fretful contrasts of high aspirations and inadequate powers, in the end believe in a blind fate.

One of this unfortunate class was Seth Milford. Born and bred on the farm which he now inherited, and having never been beyond the shadows of his native hills, he had nevertheless “immortal longings in him.” Naturally diffident and shy, and very imperfectly educated, he grew up to manhood, dissatisfied, restless, wretched—despising and scorning the circle to

which by habit and manner he belonged, and consciously fitted for no other, though gifted with a mind superior to that of thousands occupying high places in society, and looking down upon him. He was not loved—even by his two sisters, with whom he lived in the old homestead, and whom he supported, not very elegantly, indeed, but according to his best ability. He would have done better, but it was his fate to be as he was, and to do no more than he did.

These sisters—Mary and Annie—better educated, and with more of tact and ambition than he, had by various means succeeded in elevating themselves considerably, as they thought, above their awkward and ill-natured brother.

Seth was sensitively alive to their want of affection—to the mortifying truth that they were sometimes ashamed of him, and consequently made little effort towards their maintenance in such style as they desired. When the spring time came round, he scattered the seed with a listless hand; and when the suns of summer ripened the harvest, he gathered it instinctively in, but with no pious song—no thought of ampler threshing-floors.

It was a wise rule among the Jesuits, that would not permit of two persons talking apart; and if these sisters had strictly kept such a rule, how much happiness would have been gained, how much misery avoided!

They complained, and with a good deal of justice, of their brother's improvident and thriftless way of living; and by dwelling on it often, and exaggerating real evils, a feeling of indifference grew up against him, which he, on his part, made no effort to break down. They seldom met, save at meals, usually scanty enough, and then in silence.

The grounds comprising the farm were extensive and valuable, but sadly neglected and unprofitable. Patches of briars grew about the meadows, and the fences were so decayed and fallen, that all the unruly pigs and cattle of the neighborhood trespassed at will. Even the homestead, which had originally had pretensions to gentility, now looked as if

“A merry place it was in days of yore,
But something ailed it now; the house was cursed.”

The paint was beaten from the weatherboards, some of the chimneys were toppling, the shutters broken, and the railings about the piazza half gone. The fence around the yard, in spite of the props here and there, leaned one way and the other towards the ground, and the front gate was quite off its hinges; nevertheless, the flower-beds on either side the grass-grown walk, and the snowy curtains at such of the windows as had unclosed shutters, indicated that the place was inhabited—while the great blue cloud of smoke, issuing just now from the kitchen chimney, gave the place an unusually cheerful and home-like aspect.

Mary was preparing the tea, bustling in and out, and up and down the cellar—singing as she did so—and Annie was gone to milk, for they lived humbly. Though, for the most part, the brother and sisters went on in the silent unsympathizing manner I have described, there were times when mutual good nature melted away the ice between them, and an evening or a morning passed pleasantly.

“Now tell us what hath chanced to-day, that Cæsar looks so sad,” said Annie Milford, gaily, to Seth, as he came near where she sat by the little spotted cow. Without heeding the gay salutation, he threw open the gate, and, neglecting to slip his hand through the bridle rein, as he should have done, he suffered his horse to pass on in what direction he chose, and that was so close to the little cow as to make her whirl suddenly round, and thus upset the milk over the clean dress of Annie. She was, however, in too pleasant a mood to be seriously vexed, and called after Seth, saying—“Just stop, and see the ruin you have wrought—when I was thinking, too, what color would best suit my complexion.”

The young man passed on moodily without answering, and seemingly without heeding her raillery; but a kind word is never lost, and, affecting to busy himself, he waited till Annie’s pail was again flowing, when, passing as by accident, he took it from her hand and carried it into the house.

“I think the air feels like rain,” said Annie, as she took the milk to strain, and Seth replied that he thought so too; and this was the first time he had spoken to her that day.

By the time Seth had washed his face and hands in the tin basin that always stood on the stone step at the door, and Annie had strained the milk, and washed and turned down her bright tin pail by the well-curb, the tea was ready, and though the girls had made the most of a scanty larder, the board was less substantially spread than suited the requirements of a hungry man.

“Well, Seth,” said Mary, as she added the spoonful of sugar to his cup of tea, which he liked to be sweet, “I gave away all your old boots to-day, to Captain Hill, who wanted them to smoke under the nose of a consumptive colt.” Seth could not help laughing, though he tried hard to do so; and drawing nearer to the table, he began to eat his supper, which he at first manifested no disposition to do.

“He staid a good while with us,” continued Mary, “and amused us very much with anecdotes of early times; relating, amongst other things, how, when he retired from the militia captaincy, he traded his regimentals for a steer.”

“Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!” said Seth, as he passed his cup to be refilled—a thing he was seldom known to do. With light and lively talk of this sort, the supper passed—so small a thing turns the current, sends it rippling into the sunshine, or moving toward the shade. When the meal was finished, Seth took up the market-basket, saying he would go into the village and see if he could add anything to their stock of provision.

“Not to-night,” said the sisters, both at once—“you look tired—let it be to-morrow, or the next day.”

But the more they dissuaded him from going, the more he was inclined to go—though a week’s scolding could not have induced him to do so—and he left the house, saying perhaps he should gather a little harmless gossip to enliven the next evening meal; and his heart and step were lighter than they had been for many a day. Lifting the broken gate, to pass out, he resolved to stop at the blacksmith’s and order some new hinges.

The tea things were put by, and a little fire blazed cheerfully on the hearth, for the evenings were growing chilly. Annie sat knitting a sock of gray woollen yarn, beside the little old-

fashioned work-table, and Mary was reading from a favorite volume, when Seth returned, and, placing his well-filled basket on the table, he took up a ham of partly-dried beef, saying, "When I come home to-morrow night, I want some of this broiled for supper; and here are some cranberries, too, to be stewed."

Mary said it should be as he wished, and kindly giving him the rocking-chair, they sat together—Annie knitting, Mary reading, and Seth rocking backwards and forwards before the fire, and occasionally making some comment on the book, till the old cock, from the cherry tree by the door, crowed for nine o'clock.

Then, laying the embers together, they talked of various plans for future improvements. The paling around the yard was to be straightened up and whitewashed, the shrubbery trimmed, and new gravel put in the walk. Then the shutters were to be mended and painted, a rag carpet which the girls had made was to be woven for the dining-room, a boy was to be hired to milk the cows and assist about the farm, "and then, Seth," said the girls, "you will have more time for books and thought."

How bright the future looked to them all, for this strengthening of each other's hands, by interchange of opinions, hopes, and fears. How easy of execution seemed all their plans, as they retired for the night, pleased with themselves and with the world.

The next day found Seth in the stubble field as before, but with a countenance more cheerful, a step more firm and elastic; and now and then, as he stopped for his horse to rest and browse from briers on the border of the field, while, taking a book from his pocket, he sat down on the grass bank and read, he really looked enviable—lord as he was of the acres around him.

The sky was overcast, and the easterly wind blew chill and dreary all day—the leaves fell fast, and drifted to great yellow ridges along the woods—the nuts dropped off as a stronger gust swept by—the cattle cowered from the blast in the fence

corners and on the sides of the hills—it was gloomy, and un comfortable, all the time.

Having assigned himself a certain task, Seth continued to plough, backward and forward, long after the sun was set. But it was accomplished at last, and drawing his plough from the furrow on to the border of grass as in the preceding evening, he loosened the traces, and whistling some fragment of a song, walked briskly homeward. When his horse had been cared for, he took a bundle of hay under his arm for the little cow, but, on going into the yard, he found she was not there, to his regret, for it was already growing late, and clouds indicated a speedy storm.

I can soon bring her, thought he—supper will not have to wait long; and he hurried towards the meadow. But by the time he reached it the darkness was so great he could not see far, and so was obliged to walk round and round to discover whether she were there. In doing this, he found the fence thrown down next the woods, and, thinking she was doubtless into them, he continued his search, though the darkness had become dense, and the rain was falling steadily and cold. The mildness of the morning had induced him to go to the field without a coat, so that, though his search was finally successful, it was not until he was completely drenched. The provoking little cow was milked at last, and the flowing pail carried home—and now for a warm fire and supper, thought Seth, as he opened the door of the kitchen. But, to his surprise and discomfort, he found neither. The dining-room was in the same desolate and cheerless state, but the parlor was a-glow with light and warmth, and the gay chattering of voices announced the presence of strangers. Seth's brow clouded—unhappily, the friends of his sisters were not his friends. Belonging for the most part to a different grade of society, he neither knew them nor cared to know them; and, in the present instance, he was certainly in no guise to present himself. There was no servant on whom to call for a change of garments—he knew not where to find any himself, and so he sat down in the cheerless kitchen, wet and cold as he was, to wait the departure or retiring of the guests, as patiently as he could. This situation was

very uncomfortable, and his mood was quickly in sympathy. He thought over all the wrongs and slights he had ever known or suffered—and they were not a few, and exaggerated the difficulties and obstacles that beset him, until there seemed no hope, no good worth living for. Before him and behind him all was very dark. The time appeared insupportably long; and, worn out at last, he retired to his room, half-wishing, boyishly, that he was dead.

Irritation and chilliness at first kept him from sleep, and there is no more wretched place than a sleepless pillow; then a violent headache supervened, and he wore the long hours by tossing and tumbling from one side of his bed to the other. But wearied nature gave way at last, and towards morning he fell into a broken and dreamy sleep, from which he did not wake till the sun was shining broad and bright over the world. His head was still aching, dull, and heavy, and his cheeks flushed and burning with fever. Half rising, he drew back the curtain from the window at the head of his bed, and looked out. His faithful dog, Juno, that always slept beneath her master's window, roused from her recumbent posture, and, raising herself erect, with her fore-paws on the window sill, looked wistfully at him some time, whining and wagging her tail. But he no sooner lifted his hands toward her, caressingly, and turned fully upon her his dull and heavy eyes, than her feet dropped from the window, and, crouching upon the ground as before, she gave a melancholy howl.

“An ill-omen,” said Seth; and he fell back upon his pillow and groaned.

Meantime the girls had risen, and, finding no fire for the preparation of breakfast, one of them had gone to the door of her brother and, in a harsh tone, called him to get up and kindle it; but he, yet asleep, did not of course either hear or answer. After waiting some time, they succeeded, with much difficulty, in kindling a fire themselves; and when at last the breakfast was on the table, they sat down to it alone, saying, that if Seth were not a mind to get up and make a fire, they were sure they would not call him to eat.

In so doing they were not happy, but, on the contrary, very unhappy. Nevertheless, they felt this procedure to be a kind of duty they owed to their insulted dignity.

The breakfast was eaten in silence, and the table cleared, and yet Seth came not; but, seating themselves before the fire in the dining-room, they soon, in recapitulating the events of the previous evening, forgot all about him.

After an hour or so, the young man came from his chamber, and passed through the room where they sat, but neither of the sisters looked up, or in any way noticed him, until, hearing him in the kitchen, pouring a cup of cold coffee, one of them said, "If you had risen when you ought to, you might have had your breakfast. As it is, you can go without."

"I don't want any breakfast," said Seth.

"You have grown very meek all at once," replied the sister—and no more was said.

After dragging himself about for some time, in the performance of such little offices as required attention, he felt himself obliged to return to his bed, which he did without receiving any more notice than before.

"I wonder if Seth is sick?" said one of the sisters, when he had gone back to his room.

But the other replied that he generally contrived to make it known when he was sick, and the conversation flowed again into its lively channel. Sadly jarred their mirthful tones and laughter through the sick chamber, as the long hours passed drearily from the young farmer.

Suffering from thirst—for though burning with fever the sick man, remembering the harsh tone of the morning, delayed to call for water—and so, voluntarily adding to his misery, he lay tossing about until the day was nearly closed, when his audible groans attracted the notice of Annie, who, from having spoken harshly in the morning, was perhaps the more sensitively alive to the possibility of his needing her attention; and, putting down her work, she went at once to his room.

Startled and alarmed at the terrible change wrought in a single day and night, she did everything in her power to alleviate

his sufferings; clean linen was speedily brought, and when his face and hands had been freely bathed in cold water, and his pillows adjusted, he felt better; and Annie left him to prepare tea, telling him that when he should have taken a little sleep it would be ready, and then she was sure he would be well. But the headache, which had been for a moment lulled, returned with greater intensity, and the cheeks soon flushed back to a hotter fever. "Oh, if Seth were only well!" said Mary, as she went about the preparation of supper. It was no trouble now to make everything as he liked it best. When it was ready, and a chair for him set next the fire, she opened the door of his room, and called him, saying, "You don't know what a nice supper we have."

"Oh, Mary," replied Seth, "I shall never eat supper with you any more."

The words smote on her heart, and, hurrying to his bed, she put her arms around his neck, and, weeping like a child, asked his forgiveness for all her past neglect, her want of love—exaggerating her own faults, and magnifying all his kindness, all his forbearance—saying, over and over, "Oh, you must get well, Seth; you *must* get well!"

He smiled faintly, and said his own faults were much greater than hers; but if he were well, he might not do any better, and his life had been long enough.

A week went by—the leaves were nearly all gone from the trees, and lay in heavy and damp masses, the winds moaned about the old homestead very dismally, the sky was clouded, and the cold, melancholy rain of autumn, fell all day long. On the grass border, at the edge of the stubble field, stood the plough just where it had been left a week before, with the yellow rust gathered thickly over the share.

Under the naked locust-trees, in the corner of the village grave-yard, there was a heap of fresh earth, and close beside it a long narrow mound.

Peace to the dead and the living! Let not me, frail and erring, sit in judgment upon either.

I have told you, simply, a story of humble sorrows and suf-

ferings. May it teach you to be kindly considerate to those with whom you journey along this pilgrimage to death, and to fall not out by the way; for there is no anguish like that which comes upon us when we remember a wrong done, and feel our utter impotence to lift the pallid forehead out of death, and crown it with our sorrow and our love.

MRS. HILL AND MRS. TROOST.

It was just two o'clock of one of the warmest of the July afternoons. Mrs. Hill had her dinner all over, had put on her clean cap and apron, and was sitting on the north porch, making an unbleached cotton shirt for Mr. Peter Hill, who always wore unbleached shirts at harvest time. Mrs. Hill was a thrifty housewife. She had been pursuing this economical avocation for some little time, interrupting herself only at times to "*shu!*" away the flocks of half-grown chickens that came noisily about the door for the crumbs from the table-cloth, when the sudden shutting down of a great blue cotton umbrella caused her to drop her work, and exclaim—

"Well, now, Mrs. Troost! who would have thought you ever *would* come to see me!"

"Why, I have thought a great many times I would come," said the visitor, stamping her little feet—for she was a little woman—briskly on the blue flag stones, and then dusting them nicely with her white cambric handkerchief, before venturing on the snowy floor of Mrs. Hill. And, shaking hands, she added, "*It has* been a good while, for I remember when I was here last I had my Jane with me—quite a baby then, if you mind—and she is three years old now."

"Is it possible?" said Mrs. Hill, untying the bonnet strings of her neighbor, who sighed, as she continued, "Yes, she was three along in February;" and she sighed again, more heavily than before, though there was no earthly reason that I know of why she should sigh, unless perhaps the flight of time, thus brought to mind, suggested the transitory nature of human things.

Mrs. Hill laid the bonnet of Mrs. Troost on her "spare bed," and covered it with a little, pale-blue crape shawl, kept especially for like occasions; and, taking from the drawer of the bureau a large fan of turkey feathers, she presented it to her guest, saying, "A very warm day, isn't it?"

"Oh, dreadful, dreadful; it seems as hot as a bake oven; and I suffer with the heat all summer, more or less. But it's a world of suffering;" and Mrs. Troost half closed her eyes, as if to shut out the terrible reality.

"Hay-making requires sunshiny weather, you know; so we must put up with it," said Mrs. Hill; "besides, I can mostly find some cool place about the house; I keep my sewing here on the porch, and, as I bake my bread or cook my dinner, manage to catch it up sometimes, and so keep from getting overheated; and then, too, I get a good many stitches taken in the course of the day."

"This is a nice, cool place—completely curtained with vines," said Mrs. Troost; and she sighed again; "they must have cost you a great deal of pains."

"Oh, no—no trouble at all; morning-glories grow themselves; they only require to be planted. I will save seed for you this fall, and next summer you can have your porch as shady as mine."

"And if I do, it would not signify," said Mrs. Troost; "I never get time to sit down from one week's end to another; besides, I never had any luck with vines; some folks have'nt, you know."

Mrs. Hill was a woman of a short, plethoric habit; one that might be supposed to move about with little agility, and to find excessive warmth rather inconvenient; but she was of a happy, cheerful temperament; and when it rained she tucked up her skirts, put on thick shoes, and waddled about the same as ever, saying to herself, "This will make the grass grow," or "it will bring on the radishes," or something else equally consolatory.

Mrs. Troost, on the contrary, was a little thin woman, who looked as though she might move about nimbly at any season; but, as she herself often said, she was a poor unfortunate creature, and pitied herself a great deal, as she was in justice bound

to do, for nobody else cared, she said, how much she had to bear.

They were near neighbors—these good women—but their social interchanges of tea-drinking were not of very frequent occurrence, for sometimes Mrs. Troost had nothing to wear like other folks; sometimes it was too hot, and sometimes it was too cold; and then again, nobody wanted to see her, and she was sure she didn't want to go where she wasn't wanted. Moreover, she had such a great barn of a house as no other woman ever had to take care of. But in all the neighborhood it was called the big house, so Mrs. Troost was in some measure compensated for the pains it cost her. It was, however, as she said, a barn of a place, with half the rooms unfurnished, partly because they had no use for them, and partly because they were unable to get furniture. So it stood right in the sun, with no shutters, and no trees about it, and Mrs. Troost said she didn't suppose it ever would have. She was always opposed to building it, but she never had her way about anything. Nevertheless, some people said Mr. Troost had taken the dimensions of his house with his wife's apron strings—but that may have been slander.

While Mrs. Troost sat sighing over things in general, Mrs. Hill sewed on the last button, and shaking the loose threads from the completed garment, held it up a moment to take a satisfactory view, as it were, and folded it way.

"Well, did you ever!" said Mrs. Troost; "you have made half a shirt, and I have got nothing at all done. My hands sweat so I can't use the needle, and it's no use to try."

"Lay down your work for a little while, and we will walk in the garden."

So Mrs. Hill threw a towel over her head, and taking a little tin basin in her hand, the two went to the garden—Mrs. Troost under the shelter of the blue umbrella, which she said was so heavy that it was worse than nothing. Beans, radishes, raspberries, and currants, besides many other things, were there in profusion, and Mrs. Troost said everything flourished for Mrs. Hill, while her garden was all choked up with weeds. "And you have bees, too—don't they sting the children, and give you

a great deal of trouble? Along in May, I guess it was, Troost (Mrs. Troost always called her husband so) bought a hive, or rather he traded a calf for one—a nice, likely calf, too, it was—and they never did us one bit of good”—and the unhappy woman sighed.

“They *do* say,” said Mrs. Hill, sympathizingly, “that bees won’t work for some folks; in case their king dies they are very likely to quarrel, and not do well; but we have never had any any ill luck with ours; and we last year sold forty dollars worth of honey, besides having all we wanted for our own use. Did yours die off, or what, Mrs. Troost?”

“Why,” said the ill-natured visitor, “my oldest boy got stung one day, and, being angry, upset the hive, and I never found it out for two or three days; and, sending Troost to put it up in its place, there was not a bee to be found, high or low.”

“You don’t tell! the obstinate little creatures! but they must be treated kindly, and I have heard of their going off for less things.”

The basin was by this time filled with currants, and they returned to the house. Mrs. Hill, seating herself on the sill of the kitchen door, began to prepare her fruit for tea, while Mrs. Troost drew her chair near, saying, “Did you ever hear about William McMicken’s bees?”

Mrs. Hill had never heard, and expressing an anxiety to do so, was told the following story:

“His wife, you know, was she that was Sally May, and it’s an old saying—

‘To change the name, and not the letter,
You marry for worse, and not for better.’

“Sally was a dressy, extravagant girl; she had her bonnet ‘done up’ twice a year always, and there was no end to her frocks and ribbons and fine things. Her mother indulged her in everything; she used to say Sally deserved all she got; that she was worth her weight in gold. She used to go everywhere, Sally did. There was no big meeting that she was not at, and no quilting that she didn’t help to get up. All the girls went to her for the fashions, for she was a good deal in town at her

Aunt Hanner's, and always brought out the new patterns. She used to have her sleeves a little bigger than anybody else, you remember, and then she wore great stiffeners in them—la, me! there was no end to her extravagance.

“She had a changeable silk, yellow and blue, made with a surplus front; and when she wore that, the ground wasn't good enough for her to walk on, so some folks used to say; but I never thought Sally was a bit proud or lifted up; and if anybody was sick, there was no better-hearted creature than she; and then, she was always good-natured as the day was long, and would sing all the time at her work. I remember, along before she was married, she used to sing one song a great deal, beginning

‘I've got a sweetheart with bright black eyes;’

and they said she meant William McMicken by that, and that she might not get him after all—for a good many thought they would never make a match, their dispositions were so contrary. William was of a dreadful quiet turn, and a great home body; and as for being rich, he had nothing to brag of, though he was high larnt, and followed the river as clark sometimes.”

Mrs. Hill had by this time prepared her currants, and Mrs. Troost paused from her story while she filled the kettle, and attached the towel to the end of the well-sweep, where it waved as a signal for Peter to come to supper.

“Now, just move your chair a leetle nearer the kitchen door, if you please,” said Mrs. Hill, “and I can make up my biscuit, and hear you, too.”

Meantime, coming to the door with some bread-crumbs in her hand, she began scattering them on the ground, and calling, “Biddy, biddy, biddy—chicky, chicky, chicky”—hearing which, a whole flock of poultry was about her in a minute; and stooping down, she secured one of the fattest, which, an hour afterwards, was broiled for supper.

“Dear me, how easily you do get along!” said Mrs. Troost.

And it was some time before she could compose herself sufficiently to take up the thread of her story. At length, however, she began with—

“Well, as I was saying, nobody thought William McMicken would marry Sally May. Poor man, they say he is not like himself any more. He may get a dozen wives, but he’ll never get another Sally. A good wife she made him, for all she was such a wild girl.

“The old man May was opposed to the marriage, and threatened to turn Sally, his own daughter, out of house and home; but she was headstrong, and would marry whom she pleased; and so she did, though she never got a stitch of new clothes, nor one thing to keep house with. No; not one single thing did her father give her, when she went away, but a hive of bees. He was right down ugly, and called her Mrs. McMicken whenever he spoke to her after she was married; but Sally didn’t seem to mind it, and took just as good care of the bees as though they were worth a thousand dollars. Every day in winter she used to feed them—maple-sugar, if she had it; and if not, a little Muscovade in a saucer or some old broken dish.

“But it happened one day that a bee stung her on the hand—the right one, I think it was,—and Sally said right away that it was a bad sign; and that very night she dreamed that she went out to feed her bees, and a piece of black crape was tied on the hive. She felt that it was a token of death, and told her husband so, and she told me and Mrs. Hanks. No, I won’t be sure she told Mrs. Hanks, but Mrs. Hanks got to hear it some way.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Hill, wiping the tears away with her apron, “I really didn’t know, till now, that poor Mrs. McMicken was dead.”

“Oh, she is not dead,” answered Mrs. Troost, “but as well as she ever was, only she feels that she is not long for this world.” The painful interest of her story, however, had kept her from work, so the afternoon passed without her having accomplished much—she never could work when she went visiting.

Meantime Mrs. Hill had prepared a delightful supper, without seeming to give herself the least trouble. Peter came precisely at the right moment, and, as he drew a pail of water, removed the towel, from the well-sweep, easily and naturally, thus saving his wife the trouble.

“Troost would never have thought of it,” said his wife; and she finished with an “Ah, well!” as though all her tribulations would be over before long.

As she partook of the delicious honey, she was reminded of her own upset hive, and the crisp-red radishes brought thoughts of the weedy garden at home; so that, on the whole, her visit, she said, made her perfectly wretched, and she should have no heart for a week; nor did the little basket of extra nice fruit, which Mrs. Hill presented her as she was about to take leave, heighten her spirits in the least. Her great heavy umbrella, she said, was burden enough for her.

“But Peter will take you in the carriage,” insisted Mrs. Hill.

“No,” said Mrs. Troost, as though charity were offered her; “it will be more trouble to get in and out than to walk”—and so she trudged home, saying, “Some folks are born to be lucky.”

A RELIC OF THE ANCIENT DAYS.

IN the graveyard of Clovernook—for it is a simple rural burial place without any poetic name, such as Shade Land, or Vale of Rest—there is a high grass-grown mound, and on its plain marble slab is inscribed the date of the birth and death of one of our revolutionary sires. The epitaph was dictated by himself, and though concise and unpretending, for the deceased was a decided and punctilious democrat, fails not to mention that he enlisted in the regular service at the age of seventeen, and remained in it till the conclusion of the war. Not a little proud of this distinction was uncle Dale, and he could not bear that his friends and relations should have no memorial of it when his voice should be for ever silent. I fancy too, that he was fain to think the wearied traveller would sometimes stop beneath the shadow of the great tree that is above him, and, reading the inscription, feel that he gazed on the repository of no common dust. Close beside the broad high swell of turf beneath which he sleeps, there is a shorter and lower one, covered with wild roses, but without any headstone at all.

The leaves of ten autumns have fallen bright about these graves, lodging in the brier vines, and filling the hollow that is between them, and then fading, and withering to dryness, and blowing away on the wind, so that neither children, nor children's children come any longer with tears, but occasionally the long grass is trodden down about them by the one or the other, as all his benevolent and generous qualities are talked over very calmly, and his self-sacrifices, and heroic actions, proudly remembered. Sometimes the roses are gathered from the

lesser mound, about which nothing is said, and laid upon the larger.

Uncle Dale and three brothers were among the pioneer settlers of Clovernook; so that many families in that now flourishing hamlet, amongst which our own is one, are either intimately or remotely connected with him. That I call him "uncle Dale," does not precisely indicate our relationship, as many young persons who knew and loved him, were suffered by his genial and sunny disposition to approach him thus familiarly.

As I first remember him, he seemed to me a very old man, but to childhood, the full prime of life seems a boundary that we may scarcely ever reach, and between us and white hairs there is a longer time than we can imagine.

Let me call up his picture: but I fear I shall not be able to make you see him as I see him, for it is one of the most palpable of my memories, and my pencil, which is not at all graphic, can never delineate him as I see him through the years. On the ivy-shaded porch to the west of our cottage, I have got on his knees on many a summer afternoon, listening to stories of sudden attacks and defences, defeats and victories, strange encounters with wild beasts, huge lights made by prairie fires, when the buffalo herds, as they cantered before it, shook the earth, making a rumbling sound like that of an earthquake. Often I have heard him tell of the first night passed in the wilderness, where afterward was reared his cabin. A fire was kindled against the trunk of a giant tree, the shelving bark of which was soon a-blaze to its top, and the red flames creeping along the numerous boughs, which together with the live sparkles dropping below or sweeping in bright trains across the winds, illumined all the forest round about. There he and his brothers proposed to cast their lines; it could not have seemed a very pleasant place to them then, for they had no bed but a heap of leaves, and their covering against the cold was very scant. They did not dare to sleep without a sentinel, for the fear of wild beasts, and of still wilder savages. Once or twice indeed they saw the glitter of hungry eyes through the underbrush, but whether of man or beast, they could not precisely

determine, and so with their sharp knives and loaded muskets close at hand, they lay awake, or sat, it may be, the watches through, telling stories to the long-drawn howl of the wolf and the churlish growl of the panther.

The two pairs of young oxen, thin and jaded, which brought over the mountains and across the long reach of woods all their earthly effects, were turned loose to graze on reaching their destination. The spot had been previously selected, but darkness was over all the world when they arrived, and the owls hooting discordantly to the faint moonlight.

A little clump of walnut trees, crowning the eminence near which the proposed cabin was to be erected, had been girdled by way of setting a mark on the premises, and the road leading to the neighboring fort wound around them in a way not to be mistaken. By this means alone the spot was recognised—the general aspects of a vast waste of wilderness being very similar, and such lines of division as existed, apparent only to the practised eye of the hunter.

The oxen were very tired, and it was not supposed that they would stray far from the camp, but, after browsing a little while from the nearest young trees, lie down in the leaves and sleep. For a time they were heard treading the underbrush, and breaking with their teeth the green limbs of the beech, or the tenderer sprays of the elm, but by and by they sank down, and nothing was heard but their heavy breathing.

In the morning, however, one of them was gone, leaving his mate useless, and though vigilant search was made in all directions, no traces of him were ever discovered.

I could never imagine uncle Dale a vigorous young man, felling trees, building houses, and killing wild beasts. But building houses, in those days, was a trifling matter, requiring only the bringing together of a few straight saplings, the mixing of a little clay mortar, (which in their case the old ox did for them), and the hewing of a few strong men for eight and twenty hours or so. I could think of him only an old man with thin white hairs, and hands crossed and checked with full blue veins, and a complexion of that pallid even hue which seems to indicate decay of the physical energies, but which, in his case,

I know not how to account for, since he was full of vigorous life, and young at heart when three score years admonished him of the limits of human life: young at heart, and a lover of youth, as will be presently shown in the fact of his taking to himself at that ripe age a youthful wife.

He was not for the fashion of these days, but in dress and manner belonged to his own generation. Half his character was in his dress; his predilection for the buff and blue remained always, and his last request was, that no paler hue might be substituted when the battle of life should be over, and peace concluded with the last enemy. The antique style of his apparel, never ceased to interest and amuse me: the knot of ribbon which ornamented his cocked hat, and the silver knee and shoe buckles, to say nothing of the bright buttons adorning the blue coat, (the same set were used during half his life) and the buff breeches, and the great white silk pocket-handkerchief with its border of eagles, served to fill all little vacuities of thought, when, resting his check on the gold head of his curiously carved cane, he forgot that he had broken off in the middle of a story.

Sometimes on such occasions I would timidly put my hand in his pocket, as if to steal his purse, and so recall him from his reverie. This purse was of the museum character, having been wrought long before by an Indian girl, named Willow-Flower, beautiful, as uncle Dale said, and so named for her exceeding grace. She had first come to his cabin as a spy, and under pretence of offering roots for sale, adroitly possessed herself of articles, not easily replaced in those times, and contrived also to leave poison in the way of Warwick, the faithful watch-dog. The poor brute refused food, drooped, and whined sorrowful and monotonous for a day or two, and then, after licking the hand of his master, went from the cabin and his kennel altogether, and digging away the heavy masses of leaves and bits of sticks in an obscure part of the woods, made his own grave.

But Willow-Flower became afterwards penitent, and Warwick had layers of bright moss above him in a circle of crimson phlox. However, the penitence came not without softening

influences in two bright silk handkerchiefs; and a fleece of wool for the linings of moccasins—for uncle Dale, having perceived the wicked disposition of the maiden, forthwith journeyed to Fort Washington, ten full miles, for the purchase of trinkets, to offer her by way of antidote. The wool was of his own flock, and in all the west, certainly he believed there was none so white or fine. The presents were opportune. Willow-Flower had visited the cabin during the absence of uncle Dale and, as appeared by her subsequent confession, not thinking herself equal to a wholesale robbery, conveyed to the lodge of her kindred such intelligence that depredation was resolved on for the ensuing night. It was near midnight when uncle Dale, who had returned at twilight, tired and cold, for it was winter, was awakened from sleep by a slight noise at the door. Rising partly up, he threw the smouldering embers together, for he slept on a bed of skins before the hearth—and the low room was soon aglow with light. His apprehensions were presently confirmed, not only by the jarring sound caused by footsteps close by, but by the sudden darkening of the small uncurtained window, as with the quick opening of some great black wing. The nature, if not the extent, of the danger, was at once comprehended. Willow-Flower had brought some of her tribe for evil purposes; and it was her black tresses which the gust swept across the window, as she listened for some sound from within.

Any attempt at defence was useless; there might be chances of escape or secretion, but of these uncle Dale would not avail himself; and, withdrawing from the reach of their arrows, if aimed through the pane, he dressed hurriedly, and boldly opened the door. This unexpected movement caused some confusion among the invaders, six or seven in number, in a close group near by, and one or two clubs were suddenly raised. “Willow-Flower—pretty Willow-Flower!” called uncle Dale, for she had learned of the settlers to understand English, and to speak it brokenly. He then told her he had dreamed she was come, and was glad to find it was not only true, but that she had also brought her brothers: he had that day bought a present for her, which he begged she would come in and accept. A glimpse of the red handkerchiefs completed the conquest; and

the whole party were soon seated on the skins around the fire, which cracked and blazed cheerily in the wide, stone fire-place, partaking of the bread and meat which uncle Dale set before them; and, it may be, of a flagon of whiskey also, though as to that I am not perfectly informed. At daybreak, they harmlessly returned, in real or apparent merriment, bearing the fleece of wool and the red kerchiefs, uncle Dale having suffered in nothing, but instead, having gained six or seven friends.

When Willow-Flower came again, her hair was bound with hemlock, in token of sorrow, and she led by the birchen collar a huge black dog of a wolfish aspect, which, alive and strong, she said was better than the dead Warwick, who would never growl though a thousand enemies were about the place. She came often, thereafter, and the purse, knitted in part of her own black tresses, in part of the golden fibres of some bark from the forest, was one of her many tokens of friendliness. How the pieces of gold, with convenient varieties of silver coin, chanced always to be in this purse, I never questioned, and now I am certainly unable to divine, for uncle Dale was not a worker, nor a prudent economist or wise manager. True, the hundreds of acres of the wild land at the time I refer to, was become a beautiful and richly cultivated farm, within six miles of which, Fort Washington had extended itself, until the country called her, for her beauty, the Queen of the West; and the rude cabin, with the door broken off, and the window fallen away, was standing still, thick woods all about it, for the county road had not been made on the original track over which the oxen brought uncle Dale, and consequently the old house was left on the farthest verge of the lands; and, with something of the feeling one might cherish for a first love, its projector and builder would never hear of its removal. It was as much neglected also as one's first love becomes sometimes: between the planks of the floor the grass grew up; and neither Willow-Flower nor any of her tribe came there any longer.

Many the stories, like this, told to children by the old men of the west. Where else and when, in all the various history of the world, have its forest-invading founders been suffered to see the meridian glories of a great empire, and in the midst of an-

cient-seeming states, to tell how the earliest seeds of civilization were there first planted by their own hands! It is as if the curious patrician had been suffered to drive along the Tiber from mightiest Rome's long streets of collonaded palaces, to question the still living Silvia of the traditions of kindness by Faustulus to her wolf-nursed children.

HOW UNCLE DALE WAS TROUBLED.

OF that aristocracy whose right to live above other people and by means of other people, no body ever questions, Uncle Dale glided smoothly along, and in some noiseless undefinable way his necessities were all supplied ; whether there were pressures in the money market or not was all the same to him ; the curious purse described in the preceding chapter, contained about the same amount from one year to another.

Along the western line of the Dale farm, lies the silver dust of the broad and even turnpike, and near it, with a few trees intervening, and crowning two neighboring eminences, stand two beautiful mansions, embracing not only every degree of rural comfort, but many of the refined elegances of more luxurious life. There live John and Joseph Dale, sons of the old soldier of whom I have been writing. There they live, now that they inherit the estate, reaping the harvest in peace which was sown long ago amid perils and difficulties. But they also lived here, reaping the same advantages, while the father was yet in the world. His home was sometimes beneath one roof, sometimes beneath the other ; but an old man is not always petted and caressed, either by children who have grown up to think their own ways best, or by grandchildren, who are sure to think a father in the right, and a grandfather in the wrong, when there is disagreement.

And so it chanced at times—not often, I hope—that clouds came over the sunshine of Uncle Dale's life ; and with one hand on the head of his cane, and the other folded over that, and his chin resting on both, he would sit for hours, silent, thoughtful—

his brow furrowed, and his lips compressed. One of these occasions I shall never forget. Mrs. Joseph Dale had left him to rock the cradle: for why could not grandfather tend it just as easily as not? She had left to him this duty while she should perform another, which country housewives sometimes impose on themselves, an unpleasant one, I fancy, even with no baby, asleep in the cradle; it was nothing less than the yearly picking of seventeen geese, and, perhaps, one or two ducks. The good woman had been bred to habits of economy, and having grown away from necessity, adhered nevertheless to primitive customs. Her dozen beds were stuffed already to hardness with feathers, but that mattered not—she would have thought as soon of dispensing with her extra fine blue and red wool coverlids with which all the chamber closets were heaped, and which were only taken down about the tenth of July to garnish the garden-fence and receive the benefit of sun and air, as with the seventeen geese and two or three ducks. But passing these peculiarities: herself, and the man servant, and the maid servant, with the larger children, more or less, had succeeded, after many crosses and drivings hither and thither, in lodging the gabblers conveniently in the vacant room of an out-building, denominated by common usage the goose-room, and clad in an old-fashioned gown, used by her mother before her for a similar purpose, and with her heavy brown hair ungracefully wound beneath a closely-fitting cap of white muslin, Mrs. Joseph Dale had but well commenced the picking, when the cries of the baby aroused her motherly sympathies. For a time she continued her work, trusting to the careful rocking of grandfather—afterwards to the lulling influences of his gentle talk and vibratory tossings—but all would not do: louder and louder came the voice, till the angry mother, tossed from her lap the gray goose whose neck had only in part been divested of its graceful plumes, exclaiming, “Grandfather, I suppose, means to let the baby cry itself to death!”

A moment after, she presented herself—her eyebrows full of down, and a white fringe hanging all around the edges of her hair; and taking the baby from his arms, in silence, bestowed on the good old man a look that might have struck terror to a regi-

ment, as he tried to apologise, by saying he was not worth much any more—that he had fallen asleep at his task, and the mischief had occurred in consequence. “So it seems,” replied the daughter-in-law, no wise softened—and added something about its being seldom enough he was asked to do anything; which, though he but imperfectly heard it, caused him to twist the rim of his hat to a more angular shape, before adjusting it for a walk to his other home, which he performed in a manner erect and stately, as though neither gout nor rheumatism had ever made his acquaintance.

The dinner at both houses was usually served punctually at the moment when the sunshine, streaming straight in at the south door, indicated the noon, but to-day there had been a little variation—Mrs. Joseph Dale had delayed dinner in consequence of her occupation, and Mrs. John Dale had served hers already in consequence of a proposed visit.

Uncle Dale was fond of his dinner, and a prospect of fasting till tea time, was not calculated to smooth down his turbulence of spirit. After a brief salutation he seated himself, and moodily leaning his head on his cane, as his fashion was when his equanimity had been in any way ruffled, remained silent, thinking that Mrs. John Dale must know he had not dined, and did not wish to give herself trouble on his account.

In another temper he would have stated his necessities; but to-day he expected them to be anticipated; he was, he felt, at best but a useless and troublesome old man, whom nobody wanted to be burdened with, and as he occasionally lifted up his eyes he glanced toward the graveyard, half wishing he already filled the little space which would presently be allotted to him.

Meantime, Mrs. John Dale, seemingly unconscious of his presence, was busily preparing for “going abroad,” as the passing an afternoon with a relation and neighbor was described. Very smart and tidy she looked in her new gingham and black silk apron, and cap with the crimped ruffle and blue ribbon; and as, with a little parcel of visiting work in her hand, (stuff for making two table-cloths and a sheet), she got out precisely as the clock from the mantle struck one, Uncle Dale smiled;

perhaps he thought there were other women in the world who looked as well as she; but he may have smiled for the plentiful harvest, or for any of a thousand other things. Affectionate as Mrs. John Dale generally was, she had to-day made no apology for leaving home—perhaps that her father-in-law seemed engrossed with his own thoughts; and he, on his part had declined telling her that her sister-in-law was not in trim for receiving visitors, for that she had not informed him of her intentions. Changing his position a little to ascertain whether he had divined aright, he found that, just as he expected, she turned to the south, passed across the hollow over the bridge, ascended the hill, and opening the little gate made especially for visitors, entered the domicile of Joseph, whose wife, with the down in her eyebrows and about her hair, sat vainly endeavoring to rock to sleep the most sleepless child in the world. How inopportune! thought uncle Dale; I could have told her so. But he was mistaken, as was quickly evident from the surprised lady's laughter. A little gay chatting, and she took up the baby, while the sister arranged herself in more seemly guise; the geese were released, and marched in procession to the brook; and Nancy, the maid, appeared on the porch before the kitchen, beating eggs. All signs seemed propitious of a most enjoyable afternoon.

This was all vexing to the old man, who, alone and hungry, sat within view—nothing, he felt, done for his pleasure or accommodation, then, or ever; for one little slight leads to exaggeration of all the slights and mischances of life.

After a while he grew weary of his own thoughts, and for the want of other occupation, or led by the regretful nature of his reflections, strolled away toward the long deserted cabin. At first he sighed heavily, seeing how the birds had built their nests among the loose stones of the chimney, how the roof had fallen away, and the rain beaten through the chinks, how the floor was decayed, and the mildew creeping along the walls. Then he began to think how it might be restored—a few shingles, a little repairing about the chimney and hearth, some new flooring, a little plaster and whitewash, with the resetting of the glass, would completely renovate the house, make it as good as

new, and in fact better. Why should it not be done? only the labors of a strong man for a day or two, and a trifling expenditure, were needed, in fact, he believed he could well nigh perform the whole task himself; and putting his cane aside, and throwing off his blue coat, with the energy and earnestness of twenty, he began heaping loose stones together, and tearing out the floor as though the restoration of the old house were a foregone conclusion, and he himself the architect and mason, carpenter and glazier. His energies were soon exhausted, however, for at sixty a man may not handle timbers and stones as with the weight of forty less years upon him, and at the spur of another resolution he ceased to work, as suddenly as he had commenced. But his face, so far from expressing regret, was full of light and satisfaction, and as he briskly retraced his steps toward the house of his son, he looked twenty years younger than when he left it.

During the long afternoon, while Mrs. John Dale wrought at her table cloths and sheet, and Mrs. Joseph Dale sewed together six great sacks for carrying wheat to the mill, they naturally enough disclosed to each other their little trials, many of which hinged upon the oddities and coming childishness of the old man. Of course, neither wanted to say anything unkind, nor would she, for the world; and yet when the conversation had been repeatedly broken off, one or the other would renew it by saying, "I must tell you of another thing which to me is a great vexation;" whereupon followed some little complaint—perhaps that grandfather would pass his cup for more sugar in his tea—perhaps that he monopolized the talk when visitors were present, or perhaps that he was stirring too early in the morning.

True, Uncle Dale heard none of these things, but he felt instinctively that they were likely to be said, and so they contributed to his growing discomfort.

THE OLD MAN'S WOOING AND HIS WIDOW.

WHEN Mrs. John Dale returned home, at sunset, she found that "Grandfather," as she called uncle Dale, was not there. All the members of the family were inquired of concerning him, and it was at length ascertained that he had been last seen climbing into the stage coach, but nothing further could be learned. A week went by—ten days—two weeks—a month—when, one evening, in the coach which took him away, in excellent health and spirits, and dressed with more than his usual precision, Uncle Dale returned. The two families felt as if some conspiracy had been forming, and his reception was a little dubious, though evidently there was an effort to seem pleased. More than ordinary pains were taken for his satisfaction, but the politeness was too formal, and the constraint was apparent.

When the workmen commenced repairing the cabin, no one asked familiarly what he proposed to do; and when the children climbed on his knees and teased about his intentions, they were hushed and told they were quite too heavy for him.

This was not for any lack of curiosity; why should it be so? certainly Uncle Dale had manifested no such interest for years, as he did now in the restoration of the old house, assisting, every day, himself, till all was complete, though for a long time previously, he had been unused to any toil.

When it was done, he felicitated himself greatly on the cosy, comfortable look it presented, but no one noticed or added anything to his felicity; indeed there seemed an unconsciousness of his movements, and even when he said it would look much better when he should get the furniture home, there was still the same apparent indifference.

This silence made him visibly uneasy; he was desirous of being questioned; yet no one embraced the frequent opportunities he gave for the purpose. In vain he said that John and Joseph might have their big houses in welcome, and that he would rather live in the old cabin than with either of them. At length he became restlessly dissatisfied, sitting sometimes for hours with his head resting on his cane, without speaking; at other times going from John's to Joseph's, and from Joseph's to John's, half a dozen times during the day. Neither of his sons, however, opened the way for what he wished to communicate.

One morning as John was climbing into the wagon, with a design of going to Clovernook on some little errand, (he always harnessed two horses for the bringing home of six pounds of sugar or a fresh cheese,) Uncle Dale said, in a sort of flurried accent, "Can you spare your team to me for an hour or two to-day, John?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so," he answered; "but what do you want to do?"

"Nothing much," was the reply; "I thought of moving my few effects out of your wife's way—that's all."

"Humph!" said John, drawing the reins so tight that the horses pushed the wagon back, crushing a beautiful young tree; "where do you propose to move?"

"Into the cabin, to be sure: it's good enough for *me*."

"But how do you intend to live?—not alone?"

"No, certainly not; I shall need a nurse and housekeeper, and I have an excellent young woman engaged who will combine both qualities."

"The deuce you have!" exclaimed John, bringing down his whip in a way that sent the horses briskly forward, and in a few moments he was out of view, leaving Uncle Dale in a state of troubled bewilderment. During the day, however, he managed to communicate definitely his intentions; he was going to be married, and to a pretty young woman of twenty-five. He enlarged of course on her beauty and many amiable qualities; but there seemed something he would fain say, which he did not; for, many times, after speaking of an excellent trait, he

would say "but," or, in the use of some other doubtful disjunctive, convey the idea of something connected with his proposed marriage, not altogether pleasant to think about.

Rejuvenated as much as might be, but without hearing any "God speed you," he set out in the evening coach on the bridal expedition. Then it was that the tongues so silent before, found utterance.

Mrs. John Dale and Mrs. Joseph Dale, exchanged little visits daily, at which a thousand comments were made, and a thousand speculations indulged in reference to the new phase of things. They were not only displeased, but in fact outraged. An unwarrantably foolish thing was about to be done, and that too, without their having been in the least degree consulted; but all the anxiety and suspense, and gossip, must be passed over, or left to the reader's fancy. Little preparation was made in either house for the entertainment of the bride; Mrs. John Dale thought probably the first visit would be to Mrs. Joseph Dale's, and Mrs. Joseph Dale thought likely the first visit would be to Mrs. John Dale's. So they excused themselves. At any rate, a cup of tea and a piece of bread and butter were all the old man wanted, and as for the young wife, why, nobody was going to give themselves trouble for her.

Uncle Dale had been absent two or three weeks when, one evening, as the family of John were seated around the supper table, one of the children came breathlessly in, saying, that grandfather had come, and brought a woman and a little girl with him. Neither son nor son's wife went forth to relieve him of any embarrassment; and, indeed, I think he would have preferred to encounter a British regiment forty years before, to facing the little party now before him, and presenting his wife to them. There was no alternative however, and the ceremony was gone through with awkwardly enough, and the little blue-eyed trembling girl dropt into the most out-of-the-way place she saw, and taking on her lap the little girl brought with her—five years old, perhaps, with a pale face and dark mournful eyes—she smoothed the black hair from her forehead, and remained silent.

There was nothing of the bridish appearance in the young

wife, against which Mrs. Dale had set her heart; on the contrary, her dress was a mourning one, and simply, it may be a little old-fashionedly made. White frills about the wrists, and fitting close to the neck, relieved the otherwise sombre effect, for she wore no ornament but a wealth of luxuriant chestnut hair, which, though put plainly away, lay in wavy masses along the brow, that was white, and shaded with sorrow.

In spite of her resolved obduracy, Mrs. Dale was slightly softened, obviously so, when the moisture gathered to the eyes of the young wife, though she endeavored to conceal it; and more so when the dark-eyed little girl, putting her arms around her neck, said softly, "Mother, what makes you cry?"

A flush of crimson mounted to the face of the young mother, and the tears, held back till then, dropped heavily one by one on the head of the girl, who, leaning against her bosom, presently fell asleep.

Uncle Dale turned away and said something hurriedly about the sunset; and the children came about his knees saying, "Who is she, grandfather?" and "What makes her cry?"

Without answering the last question, Uncle Dale said he had brought them a new aunt; they must call her Aunt Polly: so it soon became a natural and familiar thing to say grandfather and Aunt Polly, for Mrs. Dale caught the instruction conveyed to the children, and with a woman's tact said Aunt Polly too.

I remember of visiting them after they were domiciled in the cabin; how comfortable and homelike it all was—the bright rag carpet on the floor—the small and plain table on which lay the Bible and hymn-book—the cupboard with its open doors, where the china and britannia were wisely set for show—and Uncle Dale's cushioned chair—I can see it all before me as plainly as I see the appointments of my own room. And Uncle Dale and Aunt Polly—I can see them, just as they used to look—she, meek, and gentle, and devoted, for she was of a quiet nature, and had the kindest heart I ever knew, engaged with knitting or sewing, or in the performance of some household duty, while Uncle Dale sat by the door, or at the fireside, as the season might be, reading aloud from the newspaper, or telling stories of olden times.

Aunt Polly was not mentally gifted; in truth, she could not fathom half her husband said to her; but her reverential love prompted the liveliest and most implicit obedience to his wishes; and they glided smoothly, and I think happily along.

Mrs. Joseph Dale, and Mrs. John Dale, became measurably reconciled to the new order of things, and to the young wife, for she won upon all hearts, and though they sometimes said she was not much like grandmother, (whom they had never seen) they supposed they ought not to complain—and surely there was no reason why they should do so.

But for the little girl there was no kind word; no pet names; they had little children too, but they did not like her to play with them. This was the felt if not the expressed understanding, and the child wandered lonesomely about the woods, or sat by the brookside in the sun all day, till the summer was faded, and the autumn gone, and the winter whitening all the hills. Then it was that, digging down through the snow they made her a grave, and she needed no playmates nor kind words thenceforward. When the spring came round, the violets sprung up at her head and her feet, and quite overrun the little yellow heap of earth that was above her, blooming and blossoming as brightly as over the heir of a hundred kings—she had never other monument.

In the little white-washed cabin the widowed wife yet lives, training the roses at the windows, and keeping all things just as “grandfather” liked to have them when he sat in the great arm chair, telling her stories of battles and pioneer life: all things that were his, are held sacred; the bridal dress is hung carefully aside, and she wears it only when she visits the two graves under the locust. But the mourning has never been changed—never will be, I think, and the look of patient meekness she wears still, only with more of sorrow in it. She is “Aunt Polly” to every body, and all love and respect her.

DEACON WHITFIELD'S FOLKS.

I SHOULD very imperfectly fulfil the duty I have undertaken of sketching the various society of Clovernook, if I omitted altogether some notices of ecclesiastical affairs, which constitute so interesting and important a portion of all history. So I shall here devote a chapter to the dignitaries of our church, which, like establishments in greater scenes, has had its share of vicissitudes.

It was the time of the full moon of the harvest—winrows of sweet-smelling hay ridged the meadows, and the golden waves of the wheat fields rose and fell as the winds ran in and out. The flocks, shorn of their heavy fleeces, and scarcely yet accustomed to their new state, bleated along the hill sides, while the heifers buried their sleek flanks in great beds of clover, and the oxen, to me ever patient and beautiful, bowed their necks to the yoke, for the ingathering of the dry hay and the bound sheaves ;

“The steer forgot to graze,
And, where the hedgerow cuts the pathway, stood,
Leaning his horns into the neighboring field,
And lowing to his fellows.”

But though it was the time of harvest, and of a plenteous harvest, there was no great deal of joy in the family of Deacon Whitfield. The possessor of an ample fortune, he neither enjoyed it himself, nor suffered his family to do so. This way of managing affairs was perfectly consonant to the feelings of Mrs. Whitfield ; and, sick or well, day after day she wrought on, like a suffering martyr, without any thought of shifting the burden

which, as a part of her destiny, she meekly accepted; but the children were sometimes sadly rebellious. There was never rest nor respite from labor; if they grew tired of one thing, they were told to do another, and that would be rest enough. Sundays, there was no work, it is true, but there was no play. The Pilgrim's Progress, Baxter's Saint's Everlasting Rest, and one or two other volumes, comprised the Deacon's library, and were supposed to be sufficiently interesting for all times and seasons. The same coats, hats, and dresses, were expected to serve, and did serve, for two or three years. Now, most persons feel uncomfortable when they are conscious of looking so peculiar in any way as to make them the pointed objects of observation. But the Deacon was singularly free from this weakness; and when sometimes Mrs. Whitfield ventured to suggest, in a gentle way, that his outer man required to be renewed, he invariably replied, that *his* father never had so fine a suit as was his, and that what was good enough for his father, was good enough for himself: and so the good woman was silent, if not convinced.

The same articles of furniture, few and simple, with which they originally commenced housekeeping, served still, and were, in fact, as the Deacon said, though the oldest son was now twenty, good as new. Only one innovation had been made, in the purchase of a fashionable sofa, which, in the midst of its slender and old-fashioned associates, looked sadly out of place—a sort of “jewel in an Ethiop's ear.” It was a great surprise—a shock, as it were—to the family, when the Deacon announced his intention of buying it. The dairy had become overstocked, it was becoming late in the season, and the cows, the Deacon said, would eat their own heads off before spring, and he should just turn two of them into a sofa “for your mother here”—conveying the startling intelligence rather to the children than to the wife.

“What, father! did you say a sofa?” said Sally Whitfield, letting her knitting drop in her lap.

“Yes, I said so; a sofa for your mother here,” he replied.

“Mother don't want any sofa,” said Mrs. Whitfield, turning away and wiping the tears from her eyes; for such considerate

kindness, on the part of her husband, quite melted her heart. "What could have put that into your head, Samuel?"

"I guess father has tapped the wrong cider barrel," said Jerry Whitfield to his sister, in a low tone; but his mother caught it, low as it was, and turning upon him her serious, rebuking countenance, she said, simply, "Jeremiah Whitfield!" There was no need that she should say more.

All men have generous moods sometimes, and Deacon Whitfield had his, though they occurred but once in twenty years or so. And a few days after this little conversation, he mounted his market wagon, dressed in his Sunday's best, and proceeded staidly and soberly to town, while Jerry followed behind, driving two cows.

But at the opening of our story, it was, as I have said, harvest-time at the Deacon's, and there was a sort of general dissatisfaction and ill-humor, in consequence of additional labor, and no additional help.

The whole family, that is, the Deacon and his wife, and their son and daughter, Jerry and Sally, were seated on the porch in the moonlight, cutting apples to dry—for, as the father and son returned from the harvest-field in the evening, they brought regularly, each, a basket of apples, which were duly prepared for drying the next day—so that all the time was turned to good account.

They worked in silence, and as at a task, which in fact it was, voluntarily assumed on the part of the old people, and quietly submitted to on that of the young. A low but belligerent growl of the great brindled watch-dog that lay at the front gate night and day, caused in the little group a general sensation, which became especially lively when it was followed by the click of the latch at the gate, and the sound of a briskly approaching footstep.

"Who on earth can be coming, this time of night?" exclaimed the Deacon, in some alarm, for it was eight o'clock.

"I am afraid somebody is sick, or dead," said Mrs. Whitfield; but she was kept in suspense only a moment, when the genial salutation of "Good evening, neighbors," dispelled all fears.

The visitor was Deacon White, a short, good natured, blue eyed man, who wore a fashionable coat and hat every day, and didn't cut apples of nights. Jerry immediately vacated his chair, in behalf of the guest, and seating himself on a great speckled pumpkin, with an arch look at Sally, continued his work in silence; for the children, as they were always called, never presumed to talk in the presence of superiors—that is, older people. The two neighbors talked about everything: crops in general, the wheat harvest in particular, and the probable prices of oats and potatoes; then of the various changes which had taken place in the neighborhood within their remembrance, who had come from the east, and who had gone west, and who had been married, and who had died, until Sally began to think she never *should* find out what Deacon White had come for. At last, however, he revealed his errand, making it a sort of parenthesis in the body of his conversation, as though it were a mere trifle, and he was used to such things every day, whereas it had doubtless troubled his mind from the beginning, and he expected its announcement to create some sensation, which, to his evident disappointment and mortification, it failed to do; or, if it did, Deacon Whitfield suffered not the slightest emotion to betray itself—a degree of impassibility being one of the strong points of his character on which he particularly prided himself.

“Do you think our folks will go, Jerry?” said Sally, as she helped her brother carry away the basket of apple-parings.

“Yes, I guess not,” said Jerry; and then added, in a bitterer tone, “I'm glad he did not ask me—I wouldn't have gone, if he had.”

The reader must know that the old-fashioned minister of the Clovernook church, having become dissatisfied with the new-fangled follies that had crept into the midst of his people, had lately shaken the dust from his feet and departed, after preaching a farewell sermon from the text, “Oh, ye generation of vipers!” upon which, a young man, reputed handsome, and of charmingly social and insinuating manners, had been invited to take the charge, and his approaching installation was about to be preceded by a dinner at Deacon White's, he himself extend-

ing to his brother deacons the invitations in person. He had secretly felt little edified for several years past with the nasal exhortations of the old pastor, which invariably closed with "A few more risings and settings of the sun," &c., and being pleased with the change himself, he naturally wished all the congregation to be so; and the dinner and merry-making at his house, he meant as a sort of peace-offering to those who were likely to be disaffected; nevertheless, some few, among whom was Deacon Whitfield, were likely to prove stiff-necked.

A dinner-party at five o'clock! That was the *beatenest* thing he had heard of. He took supper at four.

But though the old people manifested no disposition to encourage with their presence such a nonsensical procedure, Sally, naturally enough, was anxious to go. She had never seen anything so fine as she supposed that would be; and her curiosity as to who would be there, and what they would wear, and how they would act, served continually to increase her desire. But day after day went by—for the invitations were given five days before the great event—without seeing any indications favorable to her wishes. She feared desperately for the result, but, notwithstanding, tried to assure herself that she was going. In her chamber, a dozen times over, she reviewed her wardrobe, and from a stock, somewhat scanty, selected a white muslin, which she thought would do if she only had a new neck-ribbon; but how to get one, that was the difficulty. She thought over a thousand expedients, but none of them seemed feasible. At last, as the day drew near, she resolved on a bold venture; and just as her father was leaving the house, after supper, she said, as though it had just occurred to her, and in a lively tone, to veil somewhat the feeling with which she made the request, "Oh! see here, father, I want you to give me a half a dollar."

The Deacon stopped short, sat down on the door-sill, and deliberately took off his shoes, from which he emptied a considerable quantity of hay-seed; he then replaced them, tied them tight, and, without looking at or answering Sally, who all the while stood drawing the hem of her apron through her fingers, took his way to the field.

Perhaps he did not hear me, thought she. I will ask again;

and the resolve required great courage, for she secretly felt that he did hear her, and that a second repulse might not be so silent. When he returned, however, her heart misgave her, and all the evening she sat and cut apples in silence; but when the last basket-full was finished, she ventured to hint softly of what was most engrossing in her thoughts, by saying, "We ought to work later to-night than usual."

"I don't see why," said the Deacon, after a long pause.

Sally felt that it was useless to tell why, and so said—"Oh! just because ——"

"Sally Whitfield!" said the mother, thus sufficiently expressing reproof for her freedom of speech.

The poor child felt mortified, and baffled, and so went to bed, and, half in tears, half vexed, at length fell asleep. But sleep is a wonderful restorative, especially to the young, and the following morning she felt fully determined to renew her application. The great day was come. At the latest possible moment she said—"Father, are you not going to give me the money I asked you for?"

"What do you want of it, child?" he asked.

A little encouraged, she replied that she wanted to get a new neck-ribbon, to wear to Deacon White's.

"It's a pretty story," said the father, "if you are to be dressed up, and sent to dinner-parties at five o'clock, and your mother and me at home at work. You don't want a new ribbon any more than you want a new head. You had better wish you were a better girl, than to be wishing for new ribbons."

Her spirit was roused, and she said, "You promised me a present long ago, for helping you winnow up the wheat."

"And haven't you had presents every day? Who gives you your dinners and suppers, and gets you new shoes and dresses?"

She felt that these were not the presents promised for the hard days' labor spoken of, but she said nothing further.

All day she went about her work with a heavy heart; but at dinner her father said, "Well, Sally, I have brought you that present to-day!" and a weight fell from her heart, and a vision of the party rose bright and distinct before her, but faded pain-

fully as he went on to say, "It is no foolish gewgaw, but a nice sandstone, with which you may scour the churn and pails this afternoon, as bright as you please."

Feeling her bosom tremble with a storm of emotions, the young girl left the table, and seating herself under a cherry-tree that grew by the kitchen door, began picking the clover blossoms which clustered thick about her feet, until she had fifty, for she had counted them over and over again, for the want of anything else to do. While she was thus employed, her father, whose scythe hung in the bough over her head, came towards her, and seeing her clouded brow and her idleness, rebuked her severely, and concluded by saying, "Now, go out of my sight, and don't let me see your face till you can act better."

A little from the main road, and out of view of the house, was a beautiful grove of elms, and to their pleasant shade, more from habit than motive, for she often went there, she bent her steps.

Unconsciously she had taken with her the clover buds; and seating herself beneath a low beech overrun with wild grapevines, she began braiding her blossoms to a wreath. She was not beautiful, or more so than deep, dark eyes, a wealth of nut-brown curls, youth, and health, might make any one. The wood was dreamy and still; the heavy shadows stretched longer and longer over the thick, green grass, as the day went down; the spider wove his pale, slender net-work from bough to bough, entangling the golden sunlight; the birds quickened and deepened their songs, at first few and drowsy, till the trees shook with melody; and the winds blew the curls about her cheeks, and played with the wreath in her lap, as they would. The time and place had had a softening and soothing effect, and, after locking her hands together, and humming over all the hymns she knew, leaning her head against the trunk of the tree beneath which she sat, she had fallen asleep.

Neither the winds nor the birds disturbed her; but when at length a human voice, though very low and gentle, addressed her, the dream was broken, and the blushes beneath her locks

burnt crimson, when, looking up, she saw before her the young village clergyman.

Gracefully, and somewhat gaily for his sacred profession, he apologized for the intrusion, saying he was not aware that the fair forest was presided over by a still fairer divinity; and that, being on the way to meet for the first time the little flock over which he had been called to preside, he had been tempted by the exceeding beauty of the grove to turn aside, and hold communion with the the scene and his own heart. "But do you not live hereabout, and shall I not meet you at our festival?" he continued.

The tears came to her eyes in spite of all efforts to keep them back, as, pointing across the hills to the old-fashioned mansion where she lived, she said—"I wanted to go, but"—

She made no further explanation; and, pulling her wreath of clover to pieces, scattered it on the ground.

"The flowers of the grass perish," said the minister, "and our hopes, young damsel, are often like them." Then, in a livelier tone, as though some pleasant fancy crossed his mind, "Do you come here often?"

"Oh, very often; but as I have never before had any company here save winter and rough weather, surprise has kept me from offering you my mossy seat, which I beg you will now accept."

She was rising, when the young man motioned her to retain her place, saying, "I will take a part of it, though I fear I am already waited for."

What they talked of I do not know, and cannot guess; but it must have been interesting, for, to the great annoyance of Mrs. White, who liked to have things just so, the Deacon had drawn the curtain aside twenty times, to see if the minister were not coming; and the disaffected old ladies had whispered to each other, that the new preacher was a little too fashionable. The young ladies were out of patience, as their hair was out of curl, and a general damp was thrown over the spirits of all, by the suggestion of a prim, favorably disposed maiden, that the clergyman had gone to preach a funeral sermon, for that old Mr. Peters had been thrown from his horse the day previous,

and killed; and she particularly emphasized the fact, that he never once spoke after he was carried into the house. The silence which succeeded this untimely intelligence was broken just five minutes before five, by a quick step on the threshold, and then appeared the smiling face of the clergyman, who, in answer to the numerous inquiries, said he had not been to preach a funeral sermon, but that accidental circumstances, which he did not explain, had a little while detained him. However, the apology was satisfactory to all, and things went on charmingly. The dinner did honor to Mrs. White, and the guests did honor to the dinner. Some of the old persons thought him a little too worldly-minded for a preacher, but the young people all admired him; and, on the whole, the impression he made was more favorable than he could have hoped.

Supper had been over for an hour at Deacon Whitfield's, when Sally made her appearance, presenting, to the surprise of her parents, no traces of sorrow or disappointment, but seeming, on the contrary, to be in an unusually happy and cheerful mood.

Sabbath after Sabbath went by, and though Deacon Whitfield and his wife were regular in their attendance at church, they never tarried to shake hands with the new preacher; not that his talents and eloquence failed of softening their hearts, but they felt that a proffering of civility would be a tacit acknowledgment that they had been wrong, and they were not yet prepared so to humble their pride.

The young preacher, however, seemed nowise offended by their coldness, if, indeed, he noticed it, and among his earliest pastoral visits, was one to Deacon Whitfield's, on which occasion that gentleman greased his shoes, put on his best coat, and entertained him in the parlor, where Mrs. Whitfield also made her appearance shortly before tea, in clean cap and gown; but Sally was not permitted to go into the parlor, nor even to come to the tea-table. Though past sixteen, she was, in the estimation of her parents, a giddy little girl.

Soon after supper, the minister took leave, saying he hoped hereafter to see *all* the Deacon's family, at church.

But the next Sabbath the young lady was not in her father's

pew, nor the next, nor the next, and the whole summer went by without her being once there.

Early one September morning, the Deacon and his wife went to town, taking with them in the market wagon two live calves, two barrels of apples, and a sack of oats with them to feed the horses.

Sally expected a new dress and bonnet, without which she said she would not go to church till Doomsday. And the old ones she had worn a good while, it is true.

After dinner, Jerry went to the village, to borrow a book of the clergyman: it mattered not to him what, whether poetry or science, romance or history: something within him, he felt, required food, and so he determined to borrow a book. Soon and cheerfully the household duties were performed, and Sally, arrayed in her white muslin dress and blue gingham apron, sat down to sew, while Jerry, who had very soon returned, read to her from his book, Jerusalem and the Holy Land; not long, however, for they were interrupted by the coming of the minister, who had very kindly brought another book to Jerry, which, he said, he had thought the young man would find of greater interest than the one he previously selected. Jerry felt as if he had an everlasting mine from which to draw; and, retiring to the stoop, seated himself on the speckled pumpkin, and read away the afternoon—first from one book, and then from the other.

Autumn went by, and winter and spring, and it was again the time of the full moon of the harvest. The young clergyman had won the love of all his people, even that of Deacon Whitfield and his wife, to whose house he had been a very frequent visitor. But his fame had extended beyond his little flock, and he was about to go to a wider field—having been called to the charge of a wealthy society in the neighboring city.

All were sorry to part with their beloved pastor, but Sally was more sorry than she dared to say; she felt

———“The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double.”

And when the day came for the farewell visit, she knew that her heart would betray itself, and, resolving to spare herself the torture of a last interview, she tied on her bonnet and went alone to the elm grove, that the cloud of her sorrow might fall on her heavily as it would. Engrossed with her own thoughts, and her eyes blinded with tears, she did not notice, till close on her rural bower, that it was already occupied. The pastor had preceded her. She would have turned aside, but it was too late.

Sad and half-reproachful was the tone, as the young man, offering her a part of the moss-bank on which they sat a year before said—"It was scarcely kind thus to avoid seeing me, as you would have done, for you knew of my visit."

"I would have spared myself the pain of saying farewell," said the girl, her lip trembling, and her eyes full of tears.

"And can you not spare yourself that pain? Yes—even till death shall part us?"

And the cheek of the listener was not angrily turned away from the kiss that followed the interrogation.

What Sally answered I can only infer from the circumstances; for when the Deacon shook hands that night with the young minister, he said—"All I can give you I do freely—my prayers."

"I thank you very sincerely," said the pastor, "but there is yet another and greater blessing you could give me."

"Well, mother," said the Deacon, as he entered the parlor, and, seating himself on the sofa, drew his wife close to his side, and kissed her thin, pale cheek with all of long-ago fondness, "I guess for the futer we'll have to do without Sally."

ABOUT THE TOMPKINSES.

Nor unlike the Whitfields, were a family in another direction from Clovernook, named Tompkins. The Tompkinses were not quite so respectable as the deacon's folks; they were not so well-to-do in the world, and were by no means regular in their attendance at meeting; and their relations, generally, were of a lower level. Nevertheless the two families were in many respects very much alike, and, as this chapter will show, liable to similar experiences.

It was dark and chilly out of doors, as it well might be, for the sun had been set an hour, and the snow was falling in great heavy flakes. The little branches of the sweet-brier that grew close under the window, were bending lower and lower, and the cherry-trees, beside the house, looked like pyramids, so much snow had lodged in their limbs. On the sill, the great watch dog lay crouched from the cold, and whined sometimes, as he heard the merry laughter of the children within, who, in the warm sunshiny days, were often his play-fellows. These children were three, the eldest, a girl of above fifteen, silently knitting by the firelight, for the hickory logs blazed brightly on the great stone hearth, making the silver spoons, fancifully set up in a kind of paling along the open dresser, and before the carefully outspread china, to glow and glitter in the warm cheerful light. The other children were boys of nine and eleven, as like as two peas, with the exception of a slight difference in size. Their hair was a sandy-yellow, cut in a straight line over the forehead, and an inch or so above their big gray eyes; and never was it perceptibly longer or shorter, for once a month, at the time of the new moon, their good mother, combing it very

smoothly, tied it down with a string, and trimmed it off with mathematical precision. Their faces were round, and completely gray with freckles; their cheeks standing out with fatness, and shining as if just washed; and their hands of the chubby sort, red, and checked off, just now, with the cold. When they were tired of play—for they had been for an hour boisterously chasing each other about the room, tearing up the carpet in every direction, and tumbling and jostling against their sister, who, knitting quietly, did not seem to heed them—they lay down before the fire, and commenced a kind of whining cry, which, as one ceased, from exhaustion, the other took up.

“I say, Susan, give me something to eat; give me something, I say; I’m hungry, I am; Susan, give me some cake—I’ll tell mammy—see if I don’t.”

“You had better be still,” said Susan, at last, quite worn out; “I hear your father coming.” Susan never said “father,” when speaking to her brothers, but “your father,” as though she were a great deal older, and a great deal wiser than they—quite out of the reach of paternal authority, in fact, which was by no means the case, she being yet considered a mere child by her parents, though she had attained the stature and full development of womanhood and in every way her privileges were much more circumscribed than were those of her saucy brothers; and it cannot be denied that she sometimes exercised the power she found herself possessed of, in something such sort as she was accustomed to feel, and if her brothers had continued their sniveling all night, they would not have obtained the cake with her permission; and though she threatened them with the approach of their father, it was on her own account, and not theirs, for she well knew they would not have to repeat the request in his hearing.

In a moment there was a muffled stamping on the snowy door-steps, and Mr. Tompkins, with a very red face, and an unusually surly expression, presented himself. Now, Mr. Tompkins was of the most bland and genial manner imaginable, when he went visiting, or to mill, or to meeting, but at home, he maintained the most uncompromising austerity, only relaxing a little when some neighbor chanced to drop in. He

evidently thought the least talk with his children, on terms of equality, an abatement of proper dignity, and so he seldom talked, and never smiled, for that might seem to imply a willingness to talk. To Mrs. Tompkins, he sometimes yielded a little, because she would talk whether he responded or not.

Drawing off his great coat, he shook out the snow, some of which fell on the upturned faces of the two boys, and some in the lap of Susan, making her needles grate under their yarn stitches. This accomplished, he hung it on the back of a chair before the fire to dry, and taking off his hat, shook it roughly over his hand, by way of loosening the snow from the little fur that remained on it. Mr. Tompkins never got a new hat, at least not since I remember, though his wife wore fine shawls and dresses.

William and John, meantime, kept up their cry for the cake, but not till Mr. Tompkins had been sometime seated before the fire, and quite a little puddle of water had thawed from his boots, and soiled the bluestone hearth, did he sanction their appeal—not by words, but by slowly and gravely turning his head toward Susan, and slightly elevating his eyebrows, perceiving which, she at once put down her work, lighted a tallow candle, and went to the cellar, to do which, she was obliged to go out of doors, and half-way round the house, whence she presently returned with her light blown out by the wind, and a great rent in her apron, caused by its catching, in the dark, on a loose hoop of the vinegar-barrel. The tears came to her eyes, partly from anger, partly from sorrow, for the apron was of silk, and made with special reference to a gathering of friends, which was to take place the next evening at Dr. Haywood's. It was made of old material to be sure, being composed of two breadths of her mother's brown wedding dress; but she had done her best for it, dipping it in water, and ironing it, while wet, and setting it off with knots of ribbon, which, by the way, it would have looked much better without, as they were of an unsuitable color, in some places of very deep dye, and in others pale, from having been worn one summer on the bonnet of Mrs. Tompkins, and two on that of Susan. But how should she know, poor child! She had seen Mary Haywood wear an

apron similarly adorned, and naturally wished to be in the fashion. She was by no means in the habit of wearing a silk apron at home, but she had completed this in her mother's absence, and under pretence of showing its effect—a harmless stratagem—as a quiet reminder of the approaching party, she had ventured to wear it for one evening.

In every neighborhood there must be one family more fashionable, more aristocratic, than the rest. This family, in Clovernook, was the Haywoods. Owing more to fallen fortunes, than for the sake of free air and exercise for the children—the ostensible motive—they had but lately removed from the city, where they had previously resided, to the farm adjoining that of Mr. Tompkins. The dilapidated homestead, with the addition of new wings, piazzas, shutters, and some green and white paint, was speedily made to assume a cottage-like and comfortable appearance. The main entrance was adorned with a silver plate, on which was engraved, the name of Dr. Haywood, and this, with the bell-handle, completed the effect: no other house in the neighborhood boasting such superfluous ornaments.

Dr. Haywood, naturally of a social and democratic manner, and a little influenced, it may be, by the hope of professional success, was not long in making himself a very popular man. He even condescended to accept the office of trustee of the district school—attending on set occasions, and inspecting copy-books and geographies, and listening to the children's rhetorical readings from Peter Parley's First Book of History, with an easy dignity, as though

“Native and to the manner born.”

He also interested himself in the improvement of stock, and was a frequent visitor to the barnyards of his neighbors, talking of his own wheat and potato crops, and now and then asking advice relative to the rules of planting and harvesting.

Still there were some malcontents, who persisted in calling the family “big-bugs,” for that Mrs. Haywood wore flowers in her cap every day, kept a negro woman in the kitchen, and had visitors from town. Moreover, the Doctor, though he had been seen in his shirt-sleeves among the hay-makers, very rarely, it

must be owned, wrought with his own hands. But the prejudice almost ended, when he made a great raising for his new barn, to which he invited all the men and boys, in person, very often repeating the jest, that a farmer must have a barn whether he had any house or not. At the conclusion of the raising, a very excellent supper was provided—Mrs. Haywood doing the honors of the coffee-urn, and inviting all the men to come and bring their wives, regretting her own poor efforts to make the neighborhood social.

This dissolved much of the unkind feeling, but any innovation on established custom, is likely to meet opposition among much wiser people than those of whom I write, and Mr. and Mrs. Tompkins could or would not be reconciled to folks who stuck themselves up with their waiters and door-bells. Mrs. Haywood, waiving ceremony, had herself made the first call, and the Doctor had made informal visits to Mr. Tompkins, in the barn, repeatedly, with no effect.

Susan, however, had none of the obstinacy of her parents, and consequently when she received a written invitation, to honor, with her presence, Mary Haywood's birth-day, she was on tip-toe with the desire to go. To her great discomfort, she had as yet received but little encouragement, her father treating the whole thing as preposterous, and her mother, though there was sometimes a yielding in her look, seeming to feel that her dignity required her to present an unshaken front against all temptations. So the probabilities of the gratification of Susan's darling wish were exceedingly dubious, up to the time referred to in the beginning of this chapter, which was the evening preceding the "Haywood fandango," as Mrs. Tompkins was pleased to describe it.

Stealthily, time and again, had Susan examined her scanty wardrobe, trying on all her old summer dresses to see which would look the best; but as they were all faded calicoes, it was difficult to make choice. In her own mind, at last, she decided on a pink, and bringing it from its winter quarters to press it off, and make it look as smart as possible, her mother, as if without the remotest conception of its intended use, dampened, and almost prostrated all her hopes, by inquiring what she in-

tended to do with that thin gewgaw, this time of year. The poor child could not summon courage to say what she felt her mother already knew, and so, simply remarking that she wanted to see how it looked, carried it away, and hung it in its accustomed place. In a day or two her hopes revived, and she made up the brown apron, with which she felt pretty well satisfied, picturing to herself how it would look with the pink dress, until the fatal hour it received that "envious rent."

There was one hope left: if her mother would only let her wear her Sunday silk! True, it might not fit precisely, but no body would notice that; she would ask, as soon as her mother came home; at any rate, there was a bare possibility of success. Stimulated with this hope, and revolving in her mind in what way she should approach the subject, she again took up her knitting, and tried to forget her ruined apron, but her courage sadly misgave her, when, towards eight o'clock, looking as blustery as the storm through which she had been plodding, her mother returned. She had been to the village—for Tompkins's house was nearly a mile from Clovernook—to look at a corpse.

"Well, mother, doesn't it snow pretty hard?" said Mr. Tompkins, breaking silence for the first time during the evening. "Why, no," said the good woman; "there's now and then a flake, but I think it's quite too warm to snow." She thought the remark implied a reproof to her for being out.

"I hope it will stop before to-morrow night," said Susan, and her fingers flew faster than before; and receiving no notice, she continued, after a moment, "because I can't go to the party if it snows."

"I guess you can't if it don't snow," said Mrs. Tompkins, and Susan felt it almost a relief, when one of the children, rising from his recumbent posture on the carpet, said, "Mammy, Susan tore her new silk apron, she did." "I'll dare say, Susan is always doing mischief—how did it happen, child?" she continued, querulously, taking the torn apron in her hand, and fitting it together. Susan explained how it chanced, but her mother said, "if she had not had it on, as she had no business to have it, this would not have happened."

There is no telling how long she would have gone on, but for

the boy's asking her why she didn't get him something pretty, to which she replied, "Something pretty costs money: do you think it grows on bushes? Your father and me have to get you shoes, and coats, and something to eat, and to pay your schooling, and I don't know what all, before we get pretty things." Mrs. Tompkins always talked to her children as if they were greatly to blame for wanting anything, or, in fact, for being in the world at all; and it did not soften her present mood when the child continued, that Walter Haywood had a knife, and he wanted one.

"Walter Haywood," she replied, "has a great many things that you can't have; and if you had everything he has, you couldn't be Walter Haywood: they are rich folks."

Mr. and Mrs. Tompkins embraced every opportunity of impressing their children with the consciousness of their humility and unworthiness; and, in keeping with this, she on the present occasion told her little boy that *he* could not be Walter Haywood—as though he belonged to quite a different order of beings.

The little fellow sat down and hung his head, feeling very uncomfortable. At length he asked his mother when he should grow big—thinking, childishly, perhaps, of some great thing he might then do. "La, child," she said, "I don't know any more than the man in the moon: here, Susan, take him to bed—it's time little boys were asleep."

So he was reluctantly dragged away, without any sort of idea when he should become a man, and feeling that most likely he could not be like Walter Haywood, if he were one.

When Susan returned, she found her parents engaged in an unusually lively conversation about the recent death, and the time of the funeral, and who would preach, and Mrs. Tompkins concluded by saying "it was a very pretty corpse, and looked just as natural."

Mrs. Tompkins went to look at every body who died within four or five miles—a peculiar taste, that of hers—and Susan thought her mother's heart must be softened, and was about to ask if she might go to the party, when she suddenly turned the conversation in a different channel by exclaiming in a very

earnest tone—"Have you heard, father, of the great robbery last night?"

"No, mother, I can't say that I have; *I've* been busy in my barn, winnowing up a few bushels of oats." There was another evident reproof, and Mrs. Tompkins was silent, perceiving which, he asked where the robbery was, and what its nature.

"At Mr. Miller's;" and the offended was again silent.

"What was lost?"

"Some hams, I believe, and other things."

"How many hams, and what other things?"

"I didn't ask how many; a fine shirt was taken, too."

"Do they suspect anybody in particular?"

"Yes."

"Who is it? somebody about here?"

"Not very far off."

"Ah, indeed!" and Mr. Tompkins seemed to feel no further curiosity. Whereupon, Mrs. Tompkins put the embers together and related all she knew of the matter.

"I expect," she said, "I have the story pretty straight: Mrs. Miller told me herself about it. She says she thinks she was awake at the very time. She had some toothache, along the fore part of the night, and didn't get to sleep till almost midnight, and then she got into a kind of a doze, and dreamed, she said, that all the cattle had broke into the door-yard, and the dog was trying to drive them out; and then, she said, she thought one of the cows hooked open the smokehouse-door, and she was scared, for she thought she would eat up a bag of buckwheat that had been put in there that day; and she woke up with a kind of start, she said, and the dog was barking and making a dreadful racket, and she thought at first she would get up, and then she thought it was foolish—it was just some of the neighbor's dogs or something or other, and so she lay still and went to sleep. When she got up in the morning, she said, she saw the smokehouse-door open, but she thought the wind had blown it open, likely, and didn't think anything till she went out to cut the ham for breakfast, and found them all gone, and the bag of buckwheat into the bargain. It seems likely it was somebody that had some spite against them, she says, for

Mr. Troost had his hams there being smoked, and not one of them was touched."

"That *is* strange," said Mr. Tompkins; "we must get a padlock; they'll be after us next. Mr. Miller is pretty spunky; I shouldn't wonder, mother, if he got out a sarch-warrant."

"There has a family lately moved into Mr. Hill's old house, that people think are no better than they should be," said Mrs. Tompkins. "They don't work, they say, and no body knows how they live; but we all know they must eat, and some think they get it between two days. Did you bring the towels off the line, Susan?"

Mr. Tompkins put on his great-coat, and taking the hammer from the mantel where it always lay, went out and nailed up the door of the smokehouse, and chained the dog to the cellar door—making him a kennel of an old barrel, which he turned down for the purpose, and partly filled with straw, for he was merciful to his beasts. This done, he wound up his watch, hung it under the looking-glass, after first holding it to his ear a moment, and retired. Mrs. Tompkins stirred up a little jar of batter-cakes for breakfast, covering it with a clean towel, and placing it on the hearth to rise; and, telling Susan it was time for little girls to be sleepy, went to bed.

After thinking over the chances for the next evening—whether she should be able to go, and if so, whether her mother would let her have the dress, and in that case how it would look—that young lady betook herself to her chamber.

In the morning she arose bright and early, and had the breakfast nearly prepared when her mother came down, for she hoped in that way to merit a little extra indulgence. Cheerfully she flew about the house, doing everything, and more than everything, that was required of her—singing snatches of songs, and running after the children, who were always ready with, "Susan, give me something."

Dinner came and passed just as usual, and Mrs. Tompkins prepared to go to the funeral without speaking of the evening. While she was gone, Susan put all her best things where she could readily get them, combed and arranged her hair in the most tasteful manner imaginable, and made ready the tea, so

that nothing should detain her. She could not eat any supper, and finding longer suspense intolerable, said abruptly, "Mother may I go?"

"Go where, child?"

"To Mary Haywood's party: all the girls are going, and I want to go."

"It's a pretty story, if you are to be running about to parties of nights, child as you are! What do you think Mary Haywood wants of you? besides, I have use for you at home."

Poor Susan; it would be in vain to attempt a description of her feelings, but they availed nothing, and with a terrible headache she sat down to her knitting—her brothers saying every now and then, "Eh, Susan, I knew you wouldn't get to go, if you did comb your hair so nice!"

The crickets chirped under the hearth—the boughs of the cherry-trees creaked against the panes, as the rough wind went and came: to Susan it had never seemed so lonesome, and she scarcely could help the wish she were out of the world. Suddenly the dog rattling his chain, barked furiously, then was still for a moment, and then barked louder than before. There was a stamping at the door, and a loud quick knock. "Come in," said Mr. Tompkins.

"And presently the latch was raised,
And the door flew open wide,
And a stranger stood within the hall."

He was a dark handsome fellow, of perhaps twenty—in one hand holding a small knapsack, and in the other a fine rifle, highly polished and profusely plated with silver, together with a string of dead birds. He bowed gracefully to the old people, and something more than gracefully to Susan; and then asked Mr. Tompkins if he were the proprietor of the farm—and whether he would like to hire an assistant. Mr. Tompkins said he "believed not; he had not much to do in the winter; was not very well able to hire," &c. But Mrs. Tompkins was generally opposed to her husband in every thing, and said she "thought for her part there was plenty to do; all the fences were out of repair, which would be work enough for one man

for six months—then it would soon be sugar-making, and what could one man do without help?"

"I don't know but you are right, mother," said the husband; "what may be your terms, young man?"

This the young man scarcely knew; he was not a farmer, but was willing to do his best, and receive whatever should be right. So it was agreed that he should remain for a month, and putting by knapsack and gun, he drew up to the fire, and was soon quite at home—relating odd adventures of travel, and talking of different countries, and, also, saying something of himself. He was, as the conversation developed, a Frenchman, who coming to this country to seek his fortune, had exhausted his means, and finding himself slightly out of health, had resolved to spend some months in the country for the benefit of both.

In listening to his stories of sea and land—for he talked well, Susan forgot Mary Haywood and her party; and when he bid her goodnight, he called her Miss Tompkins, producing a new and altogether charming sensation, for every one had called her Susan, or Miss Susan, till then.

The next day Mr. Maurice Doherty, for that was his name, accompanied Mr. Tompkins to mill, taking his rifle to bring down any game that might chance to put itself in his way. During the day, Susan found time to mend her apron, and also to press with extra care her black flannel frock, in which, having prepared tea, she arrayed herself, and sat down with her knitting, as usual, but listened very eagerly for the rumbling of the mill wagon. At last it came, and when the horses were duly stabled, and the bags deposited in the barn, Maurice presented himself, with three birds in his hand, their wings dropping loose and sprinkled with blood. These he presented to Susan, giving her directions as to the best method of dressing them, which she engaged to undertake, for his breakfast.

She was not handsome, being short and chubby, but she was sprightly, intelligent, of an exceeding fair complexion—which, when talking, especially when talking to Maurice, became roseate—and she really looked pretty.

At breakfast the birds were forthcoming, and Mr. Doherty

said he had never before eaten any that were so deliciously seasoned. He understood much better than Dr. Haywood, how to ingratiate himself with the old people and was not long in becoming a great favorite with them; so that when the month of his engagement was expired, he was re-engaged for three months longer.

Time wore on—the fences were propt and mended, stumps uprooted, apple-trees trimmed, and many other things done, making Mr. Tompkins feel how much better than one, two persons could attend to his farm.

He should never try to get along alone again, and now that he had assistance, he proposed building a little cabin in the edge of the sugar-camp, which would be an admirable convenience during the sugar making, and could afterwards when Maurice was gone, be let to a tenant. The young man entered heartily into the merits of the plan, and the work immediately began. But Maurice insisted on its being well done; "it was," he said, "the first house he had ever built, and it must be worthily executed: a carpenter must be had to make the door and windows, to lay the floor and put in a closet or two, and a mason to build the chimney and lay down the hearth. Mr. Tompkins contended stoutly that it was all a useless expense; it was only for a tenant; but Maurice urged the propriety of its being comfortable and durable, and finally carried the point; and when it was completed, it was really a convenient and habitable looking cottage, especially when the fire was made on the hearth for the sugar-making.

During the season, Susan was often sent down to tend the kettles, while Maurice went to the house, to attend the evening chores. But the cottage was all bright with fire-light, and Maurice entertained his guest so pleasantly, that she sometimes chanced to stay after he returned. One twilight, toward the close of the sugaring, Susan tied on her bonnet, and taking a little basket of apples and cakes with which Maurice might regale himself and wile away the time, went to the "camp."

All the way she was thinking, The sugar-making will soon be over, and Maurice will go away; and she felt very sad; she did not ask herself why, she only knew she had never been so

happy as while he was there, and she would be very lonesome when he was gone.

“Why, what is the matter with my little wood-nymph?” said Maurice, as she presented the basket and was sorrowfully turning away; “you must sit down and tell me.”

She did sit down, and half turning away her face, said simply, “I was thinking that we might, perhaps, never boil sugar here any more.”

“Perhaps not,” said Maurice, putting his arm about her neck and turning her cheek to his lips, “but couldn’t we live here without boiling sugar?”

The following morning after breakfast, he told Mr. Tompkins if he was still disposed to let the cottage, he and Susan would take it.

ANNIE HEATON.

THE moon, nearly at the full, was going down behind the withered woods—for it was late in October—and thick shining gum leaves lay here and there in red and heavy masses, while the lighter foliage of the maple surged, as the gust rose and fell, now in eddying heaps, now in long wavering drifts, and now like a cloud of birds, fluttering and filling all the air.

The moon, as I said, was sinking in the west, and the woods, to which I refer, skirted a lot of damp low meadow-ground, along the eastern declivity of which ran the narrow grass-grown road, leading to a neighboring market-town, near which, in a little hollow, stood a small and antiquated farm-house, the location of which must have been decided on account of a spring of fresh, ever-flowing water, that, running through an ample brick milk-house, with steep mossy roof, and door of slabs, fastened with chain and padlock, had more than once facilitated the making of the premium butter for the county fair.

The homestead was simply and roughly built, of unhewn logs in the rear, though the front, or parlor, was of squared timber, and two stories high, with a very narrow and high door, painted a dark, brown red, on either side of which was a window, nearly square with casings of the same color. Along the whole front ran a low portico, supported at each end by an apple-tree, answering the double purpose of shade and column, around which still twined the blackened vines of the morning glory; but the beautiful blue flowers were gone, and the leaves crisped and withered, though evincing yet the care of gentle and loving

hands, whose little attempts at grace may in some sort render a habitation, however rude, homelike and pleasant.

Nearly in front of the house, and divided from it by the public road, was the large barn, surrounded with cribs, stack-yards, &c., all of which evinced the proprietor a man of means and enterprise; while the lean rough-haired colts, and drove of starving cattle, told of a master's hand less accustomed to distribute than to acquire. And near, in the edge of a scrubby and untrimmed orchard, was the cider-press, serving, in the winter, to shelter the wagon, with yokes for the oxen, plows, hoes, sythes, and all the various implements of farming. Here, too, was the receptacle of all useless household furniture, which, I have observed, some families preserve with pious attention; and this particular eider-press was always well supplied with such articles. In one place hung a bottomless chair, and in another a little old-fashioned side-saddle, worn out, and broken in such a manner that it never could be repaired, though it had been thus preserved ten or fifteen years—an illustration of some peculiar feeling that I never could define. Ranged along the beams, wisely kept for show, no doubt, were various pieces of broken crockery; also, children's shoes, and men's boots, stiffened by time and covered with mildew; old hats, of a variety of styles; all of which were examined once or twice a year, and carefully replaced—kept, as the owner was wont to say, for the good they had done. Really, a lover of antiquities might find the scene worth visiting.

The master of the barn, the cattle, colts, and cider-press, and the occupant of the log-house, was Joseph Heaton, a man who might truly be denominated a worker—one who worked not only for the love of gain, but for the mere love of work. Early and late, winter and summer, he was busy; and every man, woman, and child, who did not engage in toil to the same degree he did himself, was esteemed by him not only a useless appendage of society, but a vile creature, whom he was bound by every consideration of duty to despise.

A helpmeet for him, was Mrs. Heaton—a woman after his own heart. Whether the memory that the cow and side-saddle were the only marriage portion she had brought her husband,

while he was the proprietor of all that parcel of land on which they still resided, filled her heart with an overwhelming sense of gratitude, or whether it was the consciousness of her husband's unapproachable wisdom, or it was a combination of these causes, I know not, but she was ever submissive and obedient, to that degree which esteems servility a privilege. It was not the habit of Mr. Heaton to make known his wishes by the voice—he had no such vulgar habit—but the cold blue eyes of his wife could readily interpret his signs, and words were seldom necessary between them. When she saw him in the inevitable black cravat and drab-colored vest, and observed signs of getting out the carriage, she knew his intention to visit the city, and accordingly named over to him such little articles as housekeeping makes necessary to be procured from time to time; only expecting, however, that he would bring the smaller part of them—it being a convenient habit of Mr. Heaton's to forget, when remembrance made necessary a disbursement of money.

At night, when he laid aside the Bible or the newspaper—and he never read save in one or the other—Mrs. Heaton put away her work, and silently covered the embers, when the whole family retired: this part of the domestic discipline being usually enforced about eight o'clock. No marvel that the children of such parents felt their presence a restraint, being in some way compelled to keep down, under their observance, all natural emotions of joy or sorrow, and thus learning, in youth, those first lessons in hypocrisy, which might be learned in the cradle, if the infant mind were sufficiently capable of retaining impressions.

If ever, by any possibility, it chanced that Laughter, holding both his sides, found ingress to the domicile of the Heatons, they felt themselves outraged, their dignity trampled on, and their parental authority wrested away; and on all such occasions the observance of a more rigid discipline followed, for a fortnight at least, in order to bring under due subjection the spirit of such rebellion.

Every day, "long ere the morn, in russet mantle clad, walk-ed o'er the dew of the high eastern hills," a rap on the door of

the chamber dispelled all dreams, and called the inmates back to cheerless toil—that saw, down the long future, no mitigation, or hope of reward. If ever they wearied of the dull routine, they were asked, reproachfully, if in that way they expected to repay their parents for the trouble and anxiety they had occasioned.

There are sufferings to be endured in the world, that take no shape, and have no name. Living witnesses of this were the children of Joseph Heaton—Samuel, and Annie, and Mary; but there was another inmate of the family—Binder, as everybody called him, from his being an apprentice, but whose real name was Mills Howard—who might also have testified of these things.

But that setting of the moon, referred to in the beginning of this chapter, was to usher in a happy day for him—a day that would see him a man, and a freeman. No wonder he could not sleep that night: he was too happy. Perhaps, too, there was another cause to keep sleep from his pillow; he sighed, as the moon went down on the last night of his bondage, and half wished the coming day were not so near.

Nor was he the only one who watched the sinking of the moon, till it was quite lost in the thick woods, where so many autumns he had gathered ripe nuts and red hawthorn apples to pour into the lap of Annie or Mary; for, whether or not he liked one of the young girls better than the other, he never failed to present any such little offering to the one he first met, though, when given to Annie, he always said, “for you and Mary;” while, when Mary received the gift, he rarely mentioned the name of Annie. Her deep-blue eyes, from the chamber adjoining his, watched the going down of that moon. She was not like*

“A holy hermit, dreaming,
Half asleep and half awake;”

for her voice had almost a startling distinctness, though very low, as laying her hand caressingly on the snowy shoulder of her sister, she called twice or thrice, “Mary,” ere the latter drowsily answered, “Did you call, Annie? Is it morning?”

“No, it is not morning. Forgive my calling you; but I

could not sleep ; I don't know why ; and I thought perhaps you might be awake," she said, as she suffered her head to slip almost from the pillow, till her long, black tresses, falling loosely down, swept the floor. In certain states of mental restlessness, we find a sort of relief in making ourselves physically uncomfortable. Something of this feeling was, perhaps, hers ; for, without changing her position, she continued, as if talking to herself, "I wish the moon was down. To me, there is always something lonesome in the moonlight ;" and, pushing aside the muslin curtains of her bed, the light streamed broad and full over the faces of the sisters. They were not beautiful, except to the degree that youth and health constitute beauty.

Annie, the elder, was slightly formed, with deep-blue melancholy eyes, long, heavy tresses of jetty black hair, and that peculiar cast of countenance which made her seem the saddest when she smiled. Her manner was quiet and subdued ; ordinarily the result, as most persons would suppose, of unambitious contentment, but arising, in fact, from a want of interest in the things about her, and a consciousness of the utter hopelessness of all effort. She was a dreamer ; and under her calm exterior lay a heart ever rocking on the stormiest waves of passion. She rarely spoke of what she felt ; when she did, it was with a deep earnestness that moistened her eyes, and with that faint, sad smile, which she seemed to put on as an assurance to herself that she was stronger than she appeared.

Only for the eyes of one had she put off the deceitfulness of her accustomed manner, and shown herself as she really was, giving utterance to

Hopes and wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long.

In hearing of successful endeavor, in listening to eloquence, in reading chance fragments that embodied her own feelings, she found all her happiness. Sometimes she found a delight in exaggerating the evils of her position, fighting battles with imaginary difficulties. Sometimes the glory of a sunset, the beauty of autumn woods, or the plenty smiling from a field, threw over her heart a spirit of adoration, and she poured out all her soul in prayer. But, in other moods, the beauty of the

world seemed to her a mockery ; and if she prayed at all it was with an eagerness that demanded to be answered, and with outstretched hands, that would have pressed open the gates of paradise.

Mary, younger by several years, was of a gayer temperament, with black, mischief-loving eyes, and glossy ringlets, the beauty of which she was wont to set off with knots of bright-red flowers, or the shining berries of the honeysuckle—the striking contrasts producing a pleasing effect. Fond of showy dress, and a little given to coquetry, she would have been as happy as her nature was capable of being, if the means of gratifying these propensities had been placed within her reach. As it was, she was disposed to make the best of circumstances ; and, when they were most against her wishes, she had always a reserve force of laughter. She did not often dare indulge her mirthfulness ; but the knowledge of its being forbidden made the inclination irrepressible, and often, in the presence of her father, screened from his observant eyes by closet, door, or friendly curtain, she would take what she termed a “benefit.” Often she gave utterance to feelings she dared not express in her own language, in pious quotations from psalms and hymns, which she gave with arch expression and reverent voice. In this way she was fond of giving flow to her exuberance of spirit when Binder was at hand, as he never failed, by look or gesture, to assure her that her tact was appreciated. Even Annie was thus sometimes cheated into a smile. But so opposite were the sisters in character and disposition, that, though all in all to each other now, neither would have been much dependent on the other for happiness, could they have been placed in circumstances agreeable to their tastes.

So there they lay—those two sisters—under the silver tissue of the moonlight ; the black tresses of Annie sweeping from the pillow, and the little white hands of Mary locked behind her own moist curls, revealing a bust of peculiar grace, rounded to the perfect fulness of beauty.

They talked of dreams. Mary had dreamed that a strange man came to the house, while she was without shoes, in her hurry to obtain which she ran over her father’s great chair, and

for so offending was shut up in the smoke-house; and with the fright of her imprisonment she awoke. "And," she continued, with greater animation, "I dreamed that Binder was gone, and that, as he was going, he asked me for this very curl," pulling one from her forehead, and winding it about her fingers. "Wasn't it an odd dream, Annie?"

"I don't know," was the half-pettish answer. "But what makes you call him Binder? I am sure he always calls you by your right name."

"No, he don't. He calls me gipsy, and deary, and what not, when father don't hear him."

"I was not aware of his fond titles to you."

"Well, I was," was the provoking reply, and they relapsed into silence, which was broken at last by Mary, who, conscious of the annoyance her words had caused her sister, said kindly, "What are you thinking of, Annie?"

"I was thinking, as I watched that little glimmer of moonlight on the wall, and saw it lessening, and fading out, before the dark, how much it was like all my hopes—gleaming for a moment, and then lost in the darkness."

"You must not think so; or, even if your hopes be like that, remember it is only gone for a little while, and to-morrow night—for the moon is not yet full—will come back larger and brighter than before. I am sure your hopes will grow brighter and brighter: you are so good, so wise."

The fountain of her heart was full, and it only needed a kind word to make it overflow, and, she buried her face in her pillow. The moon went down, and when, at length, Annie looked up, the moonlight had ceased to glimmer on the wall, and all was dark. But folding her arms tightly over her bosom, as if she held beneath something the powers of darkness should not wrest away, she said, "You are right, Mary; I *will* hope."

What a relief to Mary were those words! she was forgiven; and she turned over in her mind a thousand offices of kindness, she meant to perform as an atonement. She knew she had purposely wounded the sensitive nature of her sister, and she determined to make reparation, without any open confession. Perhaps she was not aware herself of this, as the morning came,

bending over Annie, she gathered the heavy tresses away from her forehead, and wound them into the simple knot, in which she was accustomed to wear them, not failing, as she did so, to praise their beauty. When she had smoothed them all away, she said abruptly, as though the thought had just occurred to her, "Oh, this is the day that Mills is going to leave us! How lonesome we shall be! But Annie, he will sometimes write to you, won't he?"

"He says so; but perhaps he will forget it, when he is away. He will be gone a long while, you know—five years; that is long enough to forget us all, I am sure."

"Long enough, perhaps; but I defy him to forget me in that time. I expect to be the same laughing girl, when he comes back, that I am now—not much wiser, I am afraid, but so happy to see him! I wish the time were all gone, and this were the day of his return. Let me see: in five years I shall be just twenty-one—as old as he is now."

"And I," said Annie, with an ill-boding sigh, "shall be twenty-five."

Stealthily the light of the morning brightened; and as it was followed by the accustomed summons, the sisters rose, Annie in silence, and Mary saying, laughingly,

"Dear me! is this my certain doom,
And am I still secure—
This marching to the breakfast-room,
And yet prepared no more?"

Passing the door of the freed apprentice's chamber, she said, in a suppressed whisper, "farewell, Binder! Good morning Mr. Mills Howard: I hope, sir, you are very well;" and as she ran laughingly by Annie, she added, "I wish I had told him to pray for father, he has been so good to him."

"What do you say?" said Mr. Heaton, who stood combing his iron-gray hair, at the foot of the stairs.

"I said," replied Mary, readily, "it was good to get up early;" and hurrying by him, she screened her face behind the accustomed curtain, whence, as soon as her laughter subsided,

she emerged, making some commonplace observation about the beauty of the morning.

Not many minutes were required for making ready the breakfast, the honors of which were done in silence by Mrs. Heaton, except for Mr. Heaton, who always prepared his own coffee. Meals were announced by blowing a horn, which always hung on the same nail at the end of the portico, and over which Samuel invariably deposited his hat, while eating, and on Sundays. He was a precise youth. When Binder appeared in the breakfast-room, he talked with unusual spirit, as though going out alone and friendless into the world were a very trifling matter; in fact, he thought nothing about it. But he was not in his usual work-day dress, and this must have made him painfully conscious of his new position; but was arrayed in his "freedom suit," the material of which was of a bluish-gray color, home-made; and the workmanship of a country tailoress; of a coarse, heavy texture, it sat so ungracefully, that the form and likeness of the man were quite lost. But, though appearing in this guise, and bringing with him all his worldly effects, which, in fact, consisted of a stout walking-stick of hickory, and some articles of clothing tied in a yellow-and-red cotton handkerchief, no remark relative to his departure was elicited from the elder Heatons; and only a quiet exchange of glances, among the younger group, showed that they, though silent, were not unobservant.

Mills seemed to relish the breakfast unusually well, speedily passing his cup for coffee, though he never drank more than one cup before; but the mirth was gone from the lips of Mary, and Annie had no appetite that morning. Mills, as he appeared in his new clothes, must have provoked a smile from any uninterested beholder; but what was it to them? They only thought of his honest heart—his generous sacrifices in their behalf. They had trodden together a long, rough way, which was often smoothed by his genial humor or kind encouragement; they had eaten at the same table, and slept beneath the same roof; he had known all their sorrows, and shared them; and now, it would never be so any more!

In parting, even from persons for whom we have no particular

liking, we feel some degree of sorrow; we find they had a hold on us of which we were not till then aware; sometimes we even watch the passing traveller with an almost painful interest, arising from the very fact that we shall probably never see him again; but when we part from those we love, especially if there be few who love us, few whom we love, the burden is increased a thousand-fold. How, at such times,

“Comes, like a planet’s transit o’er the sun,”

a shadow over all the world! and for a time, in “the waste of feelings unemployed,” we cease to build about us the walls of hope; for, as there is no glory in the grass, and no splendor in the flower, only the expulsive power of a new affection can bring back the sunshine.

“I hope,” said Mr. Heaton, as he took leave of Mills, “I hope, young man, you may never go to jail: a Heaton was never in jail, sir, never;” and having delivered himself of this speech, the longest he was ever known to make, he took up his axe—he always kept it in one corner of the best room—and proceeded to the woods. He had no time to spend in useless ceremonies.

It was now Mrs. Heaton’s turn to take leave, and taking the proffered hand, much as she would have taken the broomstick, she hoped he would remember the advice of Joseph Heaton. But the frank grasp of Samuel seemed to impart to him something of its own strength; and the cordial “good-bye” and “God bless you” came to him like a benediction.

Poor Mary—there were a thousand kind wishes for his happiness in her heart; but she had no words, and turning away, she hid her face in her hands, and burst into tears, that made tremulous the lip which whispered, “You are a good, kind girl, Mary, and may Heaven bless you!”

Defiant of the cold, blue eyes of her mother, Annie tied on her bonnet, and announced her intention of accompanying Mills as far as the elm-tree. For some minutes they walked on in silence, for the hearts of both were full, and the elm-tree was reached almost before they had interchanged a word. Pausing in the shadow that fell thin and brokenly across the road, and

taking in his the trembling hand of Annie, he said, "My past life has been a very hard one, and perhaps I have sometimes thought it more so than it was; for it seems to me, now, that I could be almost happy there, in the old house which I used to think so desolate. Yes, I am sure I could be happy any where with you."

"You think so now," replied the young girl, half mournfully, half reproachfully, "but after you have been gone a little while you will forget me. No one remembers me or loves me long; and, indeed, there is no reason why they should. I am not pretty, nor accomplished, nor attractive in any way;" and with tears starting to her eyes, she turned away, and would have left him, but that, drawing her to his bosom, and kissing her cheek and forehead, he told her how much her doubts of his fidelity did him wrong. He had nothing, he said, to live for but her, and he would live for her and be worthy of her. In five years—five little years—he would come back, and they would be so happy!

"And you will think about me, sometimes?"

"Often; and I know, dear Annie, you will think of me also; and whenever life seems weary and hopeless, forget not the happiness that waits for us in the future."

"I will think of you always, love you always, pray for you always: you know that, Mills," she said, "you know it well;" and placing in his hand a small package, she told him not to open it till he reached the place of his destination: "It will at least remind you of me."

He placed it in his bosom, kissed, passionately, the now unresisting lips, and, with a "God bless you!" falteringly uttered, was gone; and there in the thin shadow of the elm stood the almost heart-broken girl, watching his receding form.

Once, and only once, he paused, looked back, and seeing her still standing just as he left her, turned quickly away, and was soon hidden by a winding of the road from her view.

"My dear sister!" said Mary, running to meet her as she returned, "do not cry: it makes me so sad to see your tears!" and putting her arm about her neck she did all she could to soothe and encourage her; and whether she was or was not

soothed and encouraged, she seemed to be so, and from that day went about her household tasks much as usual; but though she oftener smiled that sad smile, her step was more listless, her thin cheek more colorless, than before. And the time wore on. The last leaves faded off from the woods, that rose, naked and desolate, against the cold sky; the cattle stood shivering about the stack-yards; and the winds moaned in the apple-trees at the door, all day and all night; then came the snows drifting far and near; and it was dreary and desolate winter.

The hickory logs crackled and glowed on the hearth-stone. Mrs. Heaton busied herself with her knitting. Mr. Heaton mended the old harness, and repaired the farming implements against the coming spring. They should have, he often said, to work harder now; Binder had been of some use to them, and now they must depend upon themselves. The Heatons had always made enough to keep out of jail.

During the winter, Samuel, a youth of nineteen, and Mary, went to the district school, so that all domestic care devolved on Annie. For her there was no school-time and no holiday. She had, her father was accustomed to tell her, more learning than her mother, and could not do half so much work. Books would not keep any body in bread. Samuel, in a spirit of unbounded liberality, he designed to educate: that is, to send him to school for three months every winter, till he should be twenty-one. At the end of that time, if education could do any good, he hoped Samuel could take care of himself. But Samuel usually forgot, in the course of the nine months of hard labor, what he learned in the three devoted to study. And so each succeeding winter they plodded over pretty much the same ground. But, notwithstanding their slight educational advantages, the children of Mr. Heaton were not without very respectable acquirements, obtained, it is true, "in the sharp school of want," for they had never a sufficiency of any thing save coarse food; but naturally intelligent and observant, and disposed to avail themselves of every opportunity for the acquisition of knowledge, they were, to a degree, self-educated.

And all this while Mills had not been heard of. One day, when her father was going to the post-town, or when, from

sundry indications, she suspected such to be his intention, Annie, after various efforts, gathered courage to ask him if he would inquire at the post-office for a letter for her. He made no answer—did not even look up from his work, which was the smoothing of an ax-helve with a broken piece of glass; and after waiting some time for an answer, she resumed her interrupted task, wondering if he heard her, and if he did, if he would do as she desired; and whether there would be a letter. But the solution of none of these wonders being possible, she tried to wait patiently. For three hours he was busily engaged with the ax-helve, turning it from side to side, and smoothing the same places over and again. At the end of that time, however, cutting his hand on the piece of broken glass, he took up his hat, and hastily left the house; and Annie, half glad of the accident, for she thought he would delay his going no longer—called to him, “Stop, father! let me get a piece of linen, and bandage your hand: only see how it is bleeding!” but taking no notice whatever of the kindly offer, he hurried toward the barn, to get the horse. Annie thought “he is going!” and her heart beat quicker.

After an hour, however, when she began to think he would soon be home again, he entered the house, not having been away, took up the paper, and began reading at the first article, with the evident intention, as his custom was, of reading it all. The clock struck four: “there is not time to go before tea,” thought Annie; “I will prepare it early, and perhaps he will go afterward.” Acting upon this suggestion, she had partially effected her arrangements, when Mary came from school, and with her face all aglow, inquired if her father had been to the office.

“No,” said Annie; “and he is not going;” and she related his very provoking conduct.

“I’ll see about that: there is a letter there, and you shall have it.”

“How do you know there is a letter?”

“Because I feel it in my heart; and I intend to see it with my eyes. Now, what are we out of?” and running to the pantry, she rumaged through boxes and bottles, exclaiming, directly,

“Good! here is no saleratus, and only two or three drawings of tea! Where is mother?” and away she ran to the milk house, saying, “Mother, father is going to the village, and we are out of saleratus and tea. Shall I tell him to get them?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Heaton. “It seems to me we are out very soon. Tell him to get a quarter of tea, and ten cents’ worth of saleratus.”

“I don’t care how little!” thought Mary; and hurrying back, she said to her father, “if you are going to the village, mother wants you to get some tea and saleratus.”

“Mother can make known her own wants,” said that gentleman, and continued reading.

“Mother told me to tell you,” said Mary, determined not to be baffled; “and I don’t know as there is tea enough for supper.”

Now Mr. Heaton liked a cup of tea, and Mary knew she had resorted to the last means in her power, and so withdrew, feeling, too, that he would make no motion while she observed him. After some further delay, and when the supper arrangements were nearly completed, he set out. It was long after dark before he returned. They had waited two hours for him; the biscuits were nearly cold, and heavy, and every body, and Annie in especial, out of patience. At last he came; but it was some time before his horse was cared for. Then, laying aside his great-coat, he seated himself before the fire, and spreading his hands over the blaze, waited till twice or thrice called, before going to the table. Annie looked inquiringly at Mary, and Mary at Annie, but neither ventured to ask what both were so anxious to know; and the supper was concluded in silence.

“If he has a letter for me,” thought Annie, “he will certainly give it to me; but he has none; I am sure he has not.” But to Mary the suspense had become intolerable, and taking up the sugar-bowl, to remove from the table, she said, “Father, did you go to the post-office?” After a minute’s silence, he replied that he did, but said nothing further. Toward the close of the evening, however, he arose, and taking up his great-coat, began fumbling in the pockets. Both the girls were on tiptoe,

but destined to disappointment; for, taking thence the little packages of tea and saleratus, he resumed his seat. Despair came down on the hearts of the sisters, and they sat before the fire in solemn silence till the evening was quite spent; that is, till Mrs. Heaton covered the embers.

"Come, girls," said Mr. Heaton, "don't be wasting candles to-night and sunlight in the morning;" whereupon he and his spouse retired.

"Ah, Mary!" said Annie, when they were gone, "you said there was a letter."

"And I believe there is," said Mary; "father, I thought, was half disposed to hand it to you, when he took the tea from his pocket; he had something in his hand, once, I am sure;" and seizing the great-coat, she thrust her hand, first in one pocket, then in the other. Annie was smiling her old, sad smile, and looking at Mary, who, sure enough, drew forth a letter, and holding it up to the light, exclaimed, exultingly, "Post-paid! 'Miss Annie Heaton,' etc."

"O, let me see!" exclaimed Annie, eagerly. "Yes, it is his writing! No, it is a much fairer hand; it can not be his."

"Break the seal, and see," said Mary, impatiently.

But, as if to torment herself to the last, Annie continued turning it in the light, and examining it in every point of view. Mary trimmed the light, and drew her chair close to that of Annie, who, unsealing the letter, read as follows:

"DEAREST ANNIE,—I am sitting in a pleasant little room in the Academy; for, you must know, I am become a student. Before me is a table, covered with books, papers, and manuscripts, finished and unfinished. The fire is burning brightly in the grate, and I am content—almost happy. But to whom am I indebted for all this happiness? Ah, Annie! that little package you gave me at parting! How shall I ever repay you? I will not trouble you now by relating my hard experience for two months after leaving you; for, during that time, I did not unseal the package, which I looked at daily, wondering what it could contain, and pleasing myself with various conjectures. At last, one night, I opened it, and, to my joy and sorrow, dis-

covered its contents to be what only the most adverse fortune could have compelled me to avail myself of. But, with a sense of humiliation, I did make use of your self-sacrificing generosity. Dear Annie! what do I not owe to you? I still keep the envelope; and, when I return, I intend to bring you the precise amount, as a bridal present, which you have so kindly, so considerately bestowed on me. Close application, this session, will enable me to teach for a part of the time; so that hereafter I shall be able to rely on myself. I have some glorious plans for the future, but none, Annie, disconnected with you. Every exertion that is made, shall be with reference to the future that must be ours. And do you think of me often? or ever? Ah, I will not wrong you by the inquiry! I know you do. Well, hope on. Time, faith, and energy, will do for us every thing. And is Mary the same merry-hearted girl? I hope so. For my sake, tell her she must love you very kindly. And Samuel—does he miss me, or ever speak of me? He will find some memento, I think, that may serve to remind him of me, in that cabinet of curiosities, the cider-mill. As for Mr. Joseph Heaton, I have no doubt but that he has ‘kept out of jail.’ Forgive me, Annie, that there are persons whose wrongs I can not quite forget. I was greatly edified last Sabbath by a discourse on forgiveness. The clergyman, young and handsome—Mary, I think, would have fallen in love with him—spoke with an earnestness indicating a conviction of the truth of his doctrine, which was, that we are no where in the Scriptures required to forgive our enemies. Even Christ, he said, only prayed for his enemies, inasmuch as they were ignorant: ‘Forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ This idea was curious, and to me new; and I suffered my mind to be relieved, without inquiring very deeply into the theology. Forgive this little episode. I did not intend it, but know that I shall not feel myself bound to forgive you in this world or the next, if you forget to love me. It is night—late—and I must close—not to *save candles*, Annie, but that some sleep is necessary. I shall perhaps dream of you.”

And with some tender and impassioned words, and promises

to write often, entreaties of punctual responses, and assurances of unending devotion, the letter closed.

Lighter than it had been for a long while, was the heart of Annie Heaton that night and the next day, and for many a day thereafter. Through her agency the way had been brightened, the wishes facilitated, for one dearer to her than all else in the world. Annie bore the name of her maternal grandmother, and for this honor the good old lady, on her death-bed, did solemnly bequeath and give to her most beloved granddaughter Annie, a silver watch, which had been the property of her deceased husband. This bequest, not, it is true, in the fashion of our days, was, nevertheless, of some value. A thousand little schemes, all based on this legacy, Annie, at different times had revolved in her mind. None, however, had been put in execution; and when she saw Binder dismissed friendlessly on the world, her woman's instinct was quick to suggest that it might be of use to him; and, through means of this—trifle as it was—his present fortunate position had been obtained. What a crown of beauty, hiding away from remembrance a thousand weaknesses and frailties, making bright the saddest eyes, and sweet the faintest smile, is the love of woman! What were home without it! what were life, what the world, or what all we conceive of heaven without it!

Late one afternoon of the summer which followed the opening of this simple history, as the two girls sat together in the shadow of one of the apple-trees, on the portico—one reading the painfully interesting story of Eugene Aram, the other attaching a knot of bright ribbon to a snowy and carefully crimped frill, which, by way of trying the effect, she occasionally put round her neck, smiling, as she did so, in a way that indicated no very deep absorption in the tale to which she pretended she was listening—their attention was arrested by the sudden drawing up of a very handsome equipage before the gate. The newcomers—a middle-aged, self-sufficient looking man, in spectacles, and a pale-faced woman, slightly lame, wearing a dress of black, and inordinately heavy and large earrings—proved to be relations of Mrs. Heaton, residents of one of the eastern cities, wealthy, and what is termed fashionable people, who,

now visiting the neighboring town, had taken a fancy to ride into the country, regale themselves with bread and milk, and see how prospered their poor connexions.

Mrs. Heaton, not a little proud of their appearance, received them with unusual courtesy, laying her best table-cloth, and untying the honey-jar. Mr. Heaton was not slow in imparting to them the fact that he had enough to keep him out of jail; to which the gentleman in spectacles said, "O, yes, sir; yes, sir; we should think so." The lame lady, "Yes, indeed," and Mrs. Heaton, that "Joseph had enough, she was sure—if he hadn't quite so much as some folks—to keep him out of jail." "Certainly, madam, certainly," said the gentleman in spectacles; and the lame lady repeated, "Certainly."

Annie, she scarce knew why, felt half insulted by this visit. Their air, manner, even their dress, indicated a strata of society so different from hers—so superior, as she felt, to hers, that she was dissatisfied with herself, and dissatisfied, of course, with them. All their affable overtures she regarded as condescensions, and received them with ungracious reserve. "They would not like me, do as I would, and I will make no effort to please them." Accordingly, she kept apart from them, bitterly repeating to herself,

"Where soil is, men grow,
Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me
There is no depth to strike in."

Annie was a dull girl, they thought, suited to her position; but Mary was sprightly—quite pretty—and it was a pity she had not greater advantages! She, of course, was delighted, when, toward the conclusion of their visit, she was invited to accompany them home. Mr. Heaton said "Mary was of little use; Annie would do more work without her;" and Mrs. Heaton concurred, "Yes; Annie would do better without her." Mary said, "It would not be much harder for one than both." So it was determined she should go. Such little preparations as could be were soon made. Annie, wiping tears from her eyes, looked over her own scanty wardrobe, and selected whatever was better than the rest, saying, "Take these, too, Mary; I shall not need them; I shall never go from home, now."

When the notes were dancing in the sunbeams that stretched from the western woods to the old house, Annie was alone. Dimmer and dimmer fell the shadows; darker and darker the night; and dimmer and darker than either were her thoughts; when her reverie was broken by Samuel, whom she beheld, pale, and staggering toward her, with one hand bandaged in his pocket handkerchief, through which the blood was streaming, held up in the other. "Oh, Samuel! Samuel!" she said, running to meet him and supporting him into the house, "what is the matter? what have you done?"

He had been reaping in the harvest-field, when a slip of the sickle had nearly severed two of the fingers of his hand. Wrapping his handkerchief about it as he best might, he started to go to the house, when, seeing a gay equipage at the gate, he was impelled to stop. His natural bashfulness, always painfully embarrassing, was increased a thousand-fold by the remembrance of his torn straw hat and patched trowsers; and taking some sheaves for a pillow, he lay down in the shadow of some briars, to await the departure of the guests, which not occurring till nearly night, he was, as may be supposed, almost fainting from loss of blood, on reaching the house. The village doctor was sent for, and the fingers amputated; and the next morning Samuel was burning with a fever, that grew more fierce and dangerous the next day, and the next, and the next. For six long weeks Annie was his constant watcher and attendant. At the end of that time he began to grow better; but her own overtaxed strength gave way, and for her sick-bed there were no kind hands. True, her mother did what she thought her duty; but duty, with her, required punctual attendance on all domestic affairs, to the neglect of her sick child. "If you want any thing, Annie," she would say, "you can call me. I can do no good by staying here;" and so the poor girl lay alone frequently for hours.

She had nothing to live for, she often said; no desire to live; yet at the end of three months she began slowly to recover, and, at the end of six, was quite restored to health, though with the loss of her long black tresses, and with partial blindness. Sometimes she was cheered by a letter from Mills, who always wrote

kindly, but, as the years wore by, spoke less often of the future, and less definitely. He had left the Academy, and engaged in some mercantile pursuit, which promised better for the future than he had ever dared to hope. So the time passed on, and the summer faded into the autumn of his return. Mary was coming, too. What a happy meeting they would have! and Annie, despite her distrustful and desponding nature, gave her heart once more to hope.

Mary came first. Scarcely might you recognise, in the well-bred, showily dressed woman, with her shoulders so graceful in their contour, covered only with a flood of ringlets, and her fair round arms, gleaming with bracelets, the simple country maiden of five years ago.

"Do not, Annie, quite crush me," she said, as, on her arrival, she drew herself, coldly, almost haughtily, from her embrace. From that hour she had no need of similar reproach.

"In a week more," thought Annie, "Mills will be here, and I shall find consolation;" and a long week was gone, and the long, long anticipation was over. Mills was come; but was he the same Mills from whom she parted in the broken shadows of the old elm? Was her dream realized? From their first meeting his manner to her was kindly, very kindly, but unsatisfactory. He spoke often of his deep indebtedness to her, of his everlasting gratitude, but said little of the future—nothing definite. His time, in fact, was so occupied with rambling through the beautiful autumn woods, playing at graces and the like, with her sister, that he had little time for serious thought.

One day, seeing them seated together under an orchard tree, Annie tied on her bonnet, and went out to join them. She walked softly, thinking to surprise them; and as she came near, Mills, coquetting the while with one of the bright, graceful curls of Mary, said, "I wish, Mary, that Annie were more like you; she is quite too staid and serious; but I suppose she feels the loss of earlier attractions. And, Mary, I wish you would give her some lessons in the mysteries of the toilet: that bright-colored dress of hers is positively shocking!"

Annie waited to hear no more. The last illusion of her dream was past. And when Mary's visit at home was ended,

she was not surprised to hear Mills announce his intention to accompany her back. Only for one moment her heart beat quicker, and hope threw over her its mocking glow, when, as he took leave, Mills put into her hand the self-same envelop which inclosed her parting gift five years before; but, alas! it contained only a note of similar value, reiterations of gratitude for the past, and many kind hopes and wishes for the future—a mockery all!

And Annie Heaton lived on—hopelessly, aimlessly. Few persons knew her—none loved her. All that autumn, and for many succeeding autumns, she saw the moonlight stealing through her window, gleaming and trembling on the opposite wall, and at last fading out before the darkness, thinking ever, “Yes, it was like my hopes!”

PETER HARRIS.

It was the middle month of the autumn. A blue, smoky haze hung all day over the withering woods—there a cluster of maples standing against the horizon, with their bright, yellow leaves looking like a cloud of gold—here an oak, towering above its fellows, with a few tufts of crimson among its still green foliage; and stunted gum trees, with their shining red leaves clinging thickly yet, glowing all along the hills like pyramids of fire. Loaded wains were driven slowly homeward from orchards and cornfields, heaped high with bright apples or yellow corn; the barns were full of new hay; every thing betokened plenty.

Along the dusty thoroughfare, toward the close of one of the mildest days of the season, a little hard-featured man was driving, in a rude, unpainted cart. His dress seemed to indicate a person suddenly overtaken by a frosty morning, without having made any preparation. Over his slightly gray hair he wore a fur cap, evidently a boy's; and his coat, a great deal too large for him, was of summer-cloth, shining from long wear, and from its fashion probably never intended for him. His trowsers, much too short, were of a blue and white cotton plaid, and on his feet he wore heavy shoes, one of them partly cut away toward the toe, probably for the benefit of corns. He wore no hose whatever, and from the leather-like color of the instep, apparently, never had worn any. His horse, lean and shaggy, seemed quite run out with years and service, and, from a constant inclination to turn to one side, most likely blind in one eye. His master, nevertheless, appeared to experience

much pleasure in goading him forward, by means of a large withe, cut from a thorn. After each application, the poor beast trotted forward for a few minutes, and then, suffering his head to droop almost to the ground, relapsed into a walk, when a renewed application of the whip, and a sudden tightening of the rein, again urged him onward.

Sitting by the old man was a little pale-faced boy. His clothes, much too thin for the season, were patched with different colors, and ragged still. His hat was of white fur, and had, as it seemed, originally been too large, but by means of scissors, needle and thread, and the rude ingenuity, probably, of some female hand, had been made to assume a reduced size. He wore no coat or jacket, but, instead, a faded shawl was wrapped about his shoulders, the ends of which, crossing in front, were tied in a close knot behind. The seat on which he sat was much too high for his convenience; and his little naked feet, as they rode forward, dangled about in most uncomfortable sort.

“Well, my son,” said the old man, breaking silence for almost the first time during the journey, as he suffered his jaded horse to stand still before an avenue bordered with elms, and leading to a white cottage which stood on an eminence a little way from the road—“Well, my son, this is your uncle Jason’s; this is to be your home. You will never come to much,” he continued, lifting the boy from the cart—“so *very* puny and wite-faced; but I’ve done my duty by you, the same as if you had been, like your father, smart and woluble of tongue. Yes, this *is* a handsome prowision I’ve made for you;” and taking the child by the hand, and walking so fast that it required the little fellow to run, they proceeded up the avenue. Two little boys, in bright jackets set off with black buttons, and velvet caps with heavy tassels falling on one side, were trundling hoops in the path. On seeing the new-comers, one of them called out to the coachman, who sat near, watching their sport, “Jchn! Oh, John! look quick! here comes an old man leading an Ingen boy!”

“Hush!” said John, coming forward, and pushing the boy, a little rudely, one side; “more like you yourself are an Ingen!

How do you do, my little man?" he continued, taking the hand of the strange child.

The little old man then asked John whether Jason Harris were at home; and being told that he was, continued to say, that he was the brother of Jason, but that he had been less fortunate than he, and had now come to make him a present of the little "wite-faced boy."

When they had nearly reached the house, he paused and said, "Here, John, or whatever your name is, take this boy into the house, and tell Jason that his poor old brother is about to cross the Rocky Mountains, as a trapper, and that he gives this little fellow to him;" and resigning the trembling boy to John, he turned away, and mounting his little cart, drove on.

Poor little boy! he felt very strange and uncomfortable in that great, fine house. He had never seen so fine a house, with such bright carpets and curtains; and his new uncle, who was a proud, haughty man, made him almost tremble with fear, so that he could hardly find words to answer, when he said,

"What is your name, boy?"

The little boy said, meekly, that his name was Peter Harris.

On hearing this, the two little boys in bright jackets laughed immoderately, saying that Peter was the name of the black boy that tended their cows.

"Well, boy," continued the stiff man, "since my little boys laugh at your name, we shall have to call you Pete. How old are you, Pete?"

At this, the two boys laughed louder than before, one of them saying to the other,

"Peter, Peter! pumpkin-eater!"

Peter crossed his hands behind him, and said that he was eight years old.

"I suppose you have never been to school, Pete. May-be you don't know what a school is?"

"No, sir," said Peter; "I have never been to school; but I know what it is, and I should like to go."

"I suppose," said the uncle, "you would like a great many things."

Peter said, "I would like a great many things," and the whole family laughed outright.

"Do not," said Mrs. Harris, checking her laughter, and speaking as though she had not laughed at all, "do not act as foolish as the boy."

Peter did not know how he had acted foolish, but thinking that he must have acted so, began to cry.

"What a good warm fire hickory wood *does* make!" said Mrs. Harris, stirring the embers; but Peter felt nothing of the genial warmth, as he sat a long way from the fire, shivering, partly with fear and partly with cold, wiping away the tears with his faded shawl.

"What makes you act so foolishly?" continued Mrs. Harris, who was a very stately lady; "sitting there, and crying like a calf!" and then, turning to her husband, added, "I hope you feel better. You have made the boy cry. You ought, I am sure, to be very grateful [a pious woman was Mrs. Harris] for the privilege of snatching him like a brand from the burning;" and she called Peter to her, saying, "I suppose, my little heathen, you have had little moral or religious culture."

Peter, trying in vain to cease crying, said that he did not know.

"Well, you would like to be very grateful to your uncle and me, would you not?"

Peter said he did not know what grateful was.

"Poor heathen! I suppose not," said the aunt. "You must feel as if the consecration of all your energies to your uncle and me could never repay us. You will feel so, will you not?"

Here Peter was quite at a loss. He knew no more than he knew what grateful was, what his energies were, or how to consecrate them to his uncle and aunt; but he said he would try.

"There must be no *try* about it. You must do it, or be whipped every day, till you do;" and calling her little son, who sat on the floor, sticking pins in the paws of her lap-dog, the lady told him to come and teach his poor little heathen cousin to say,

"Now I lay me down to sleep;"

but the boy said he did not know it, and continued at his work of torment. After some further instruction, Mrs. Harris called Sally, the maid, and told her to take Peter out to John's room; he would lodge there.

"Shall I get him some supper before I take him there?" said the maid.

"It would not be worth while," Mrs. Harris said; he had no doubt eaten fruit enough to keep him from being hungry; and she added, addressing Peter, "You don't want any thing to eat, do you?"

Peter said that he had not had any dinner, and that he was hungry.

"I'll warrant it," said his aunt; "children never know what they want. You may give him a piece of bread, Sally—a very little piece, without any butter. I don't think butter is good for children—not for little boys, especially."

Sally took the child into the kitchen, and cutting a large slice from a fresh loaf, buttered it nicely, saying, as she gave it to Peter, "I like to see bread buttered smooth, don't you?" and taking the candle from the table, and holding her hand between it and the wind, so as to prevent its going out, they made their way to John's room, which was a little, uncomfortable apartment over the stable; but in one corner a bright fire was burning; and John said his straw bed was wide enough for them both; and drawing up one of his two chairs, gave it to Peter, who sat down before the blaze, and ate his bread and butter, feeling quite at home.

John, who was really very kind-hearted, gave Peter a long piece of twine and a very red apple. He then took from his pocket several little slips of paper, which seemed to have been cut from newspapers at different times, and stirring the embers till they blazed brightly, for he had no candle, sat down on a peck measure close to the hearth, and, by way of amusing his little guest, read:

"A drove of twenty buffaloes recently passed through one of the western cities. They were as gentle to drive as cows."

He then asked Peter if he had ever seen a buffalo, telling

him they were a kind of wild oxen, that lived in the western woods and prairies, where they were often seen in herds of from twenty to fifty; and taking another slip, he read:

“We have always liked short pie-crust; but we saw a woman making a pie, the other day, without crust enough to cover the dish. This we thought quite too short.”

At this Peter laughed, and John laughed, too, as heartily as though he had never before read it, saying, it was the shortest pie-crust he ever heard of. Unfolding another scrap, he read:

“Of all the old maids in the world, and their name is legion, the oldest is, undoubtedly, Miss Ann Thrope. The reformers are trying to effect a marriage, with some hopes of success, they think, betwixt her and one Ben Evolence; but Ma Levolence is so bitterly opposed, that it is feared the union may never take place.”

John said he had known many old maids who were not named Legion, and proceeded to read:

“A man, being watched by a watchman for stealing a watch, watched when the watchman was off watch, and with the watch escaped the watchman.” “A fellow named Marks, who was riding a *little* ass, became so enraged at the stubbornness of the animal, that he threw himself from his back, with such violence as to dash out his brains, thus making a *great* ass of himself.”

On looking up, after some further reading, and seeing Peter fast asleep in his chair, John folded and put away the scraps, and taking up the child, laid him carefully in bed.

One morning late in November, Peter, dressed in the cast-off clothes of his little cousin, and bearing on one arm a small blue-and-red basket, in which was a piece of apple pie and a primer, set out for the district school, a distance from home of over a mile. All the girls and boys looked so hard at the “new scholar,” that Peter, who was naturally a timid child, could hardly speak, when the master, a tall, dark-faced man, called him to his desk, and asked him the following questions:

“You come to this school to be taught the rudiments of an English education, I suppose?”

Peter knew he came to be taught something, and tremblingly answered, "Yes, sir."

"Yes, sir, if you please," said the teacher; and Peter said, "Yes, sir, if you please."

"Where do you live?"

"At uncle Jason's, if you please."

"Why, boy, you must be a numskull. You must say, 'if you please,' if it's appropriate. What is your name?"

"Peter Harris, if you please, if it's appropriate."

"The boy is a blockhead!" said the master; and boys and girls, putting their books before their faces, joined in a general titter.

"Come, come! that will do!" said the master, looking over the school, and frowning with great severity. Then taking a limber switch from his desk, and shaking it over the head of Peter, in a menacing manner, he told him, that all the scholars got whipped who did not mind and study their lessons. He then told him to go to his seat, and study his book.

This seat was a high, wooden bench, without any back; and Peter found sitting there, for four hours at once, very tiresome, especially as he did not know *a* from *b*, and, consequently, could not study. After a while, he was called to say his lesson, but not knowing one of the letters, was made to stand on a high stool for ten minutes, and all the children were required to point their fingers at him, the master laying his watch on the desk, to see the time. At its expiration, he was sent back to his seat, and told to see if he could study *now*; but he could not study any better than before; and when the boys went out to play, he was "kept in."

At noon-time Peter was told, that boys who would not study must not eat; and taking his pie from the little blue-and-red basket, the master fed it to a pig that chanced to be near the door. Merrily rang the laughter of the boys without; but not even while the sweeping filled the house with an impenetrable cloud of dust, was Peter allowed to leave his seat, one of the larger boys being stationed at the door as sentinel, while the master went to dine.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, weary and exhausted,

the poor boy was bending down over his book, when the master said, "Peter Harris, have you got a weakness in the chest? I judge, from your posture, that you must be afflicted with weakness in the chest. Sit upright, sir! and if I catch you bending in that way again, I will strengthen you by an application on the back."

For a while Peter did sit upright, but, forgetting at last, sank down in his old position; on which he was called to the master, and asked if he did not think he deserved a whipping. "I take no pleasure in chastising you," he said; "but I feel it to be my duty." He then ordered Peter to take off his coat, and inflicted upon him a merciless beating.

When school was dismissed at night, a southerly gust was blowing, and the sky quite covered with black clouds, indicating a speedy approach of rain; but Peter was detained half an hour after the rest, so that it was almost dark, and some drops already falling, when he was permitted to go home. When he reached there, he was drippingly wet; but John made a bright fire, and bringing forward the peck measure, told Peter to sit down and dry his clothes, while he went to the kitchen and procured for him some supper. Presently he returned with a dish of warm toast, which he said Sally had kindly sent; but Peter, still sitting on the peck measure, in a cloud of steam, said that his head ached very much—that he was not hungry, and would rather go to bed.

The night was stormy; the driving winds howled loud, and the rain beat through the roof till the straw bed was quite wet, so that, in the morning, Peter had a worse head-ache, together with a sore throat and a burning fever. John procured all the remedies he could, and watched by the bed as much of the time as he could spare; but he was often obliged to leave him, and the poor boy lay, sometimes for hours, moaning and fretting alone.

When Mrs. Harris was told of the illness of the child, she said the ground was too damp to admit of her going to see him, but that she would send him another blanket; as to medicine, she thought children did not require it, especially little boys.

A week went by. The wind was blowing roughly down from

the north; the door shook in its frame, and the branches of an old elm swayed to and fro, creaking against the window-panes all night.

Sometimes a flake of snow, drifting through roof or crevice, fell on the face of little Peter; but his pale hands, locked meekly together, were not lifted to brush it away. The fire burned brightly on the hearth. John had drawn the bed close before it, and sitting on the peck measure, with his head leaning against the foot of the bed, was fast asleep. Dimmer and dimmer burned the embers on the hearth; fainter and fainter glimmered the shadows on the opposite wall, till they faded quite away.

No call disturbed the worn watcher, and he slept on—slept, till the gray light of the morning streamed, broad and cold, through the uncurtained window, when, starting up, he went to the bedside, bent noiselessly over it for a moment, and turning away, brushed some tears from his eyes, saying, as he re-kindled the fire, "Poor little Peter! he will never be sick any more."

MARGARET FIELDS.

I HAVE read a story of Blake, the painter, that sometimes when engaged on a picture, an imaginary being, or the haunting memory of a face, unseen perhaps for years, would thrust itself between the canvas and his pencil, and force him to abandon his work until the visionary portrait, or whatever it was, was sketched. So it is with me this morning: I had other scenes in hand, but the story I am about to write will not be put aside, and therefore, as best I may, I will fulfil a sorrowful task.

In one of the many beautiful valleys of the West, not far from Clovernook, stands an old-fashioned cottage, half hidden among tall slender-trunked maples, gnarled oaks, and flowing elms—spared monuments of the forest growth, of which the cool shadows drop on the grass beneath, all the long summer, grateful to the little naked feet of the children that frolic there, carelessly picking from where they are sunken among the turf the round clover blossoms, red and white, and building playyards, with boundaries of slender weeds, and broken bits of china for ornament.

The house, and all that pertains to it, are now falling sadly to decay, but the vestiges, here and there, speak of more affluent and prosperous days. The paint is washed from the weatherboards; the shutters, broken and left without fastening, beat backward and forward with every storm, the fences are leaning to the ground, and a desolate and ruinous look is everywhere. Blue thistles bloom about the meadows, and some straggling roses and unpruned lilacs tell where the garden was in other times.

But my story has little to do with the place as it is now. I must go back a little. Ten years ago, everything around the cottage was as bright and pretty as you can imagine, and Margaret, the sunshine of the house, the brightest and prettiest of all. Yet she was not beautiful, as most persons estimate beauty, having nothing of that physical and showy development which is commonly admired; but in her eyes lay a depth of tenderness and a world of thought; and in her face was a blending of intellectuality and the most exquisite refinement. She was now an only child, though she had been one of two children, to that time when the buds of childhood are opening to full bloom, and a cloud had then swept across her early womanhood. How often, as I went to school, after her playmate was gone, have I seen her sitting in the shadows of the old trees about the door, her hands lying idly on her lap, and her eyes on the ground. She was never mirthful, even before the fountain of sorrow had been struck open in her heart, by that hand that no love can turn away, but now she was more quiet, and pensive almost to melancholy. Her mother had been for years an invalid, and one of those restless, querulous, dissatisfied invalids, whom few persons find pleasure in attending. Scarcely was Margaret suffered to leave her presence half-an-hour at a time; now a cup of water was wanted, which only Margaret could bring, and when it was brought it was sure to be too hot or too cold—not enough, or too much—and then the dear child who was gone, was always contrasted with the present in a way to give the latter pain.

Margaret must read to her, and she did by the hour, from works she felt no interest in herself. Theological discussions were the passion of Mrs. Fields, but the arguments which supported her previously established views were the only ones she could endure. That the dissenter was annihilated, admitted of no doubt, so it was of no use, wasting time over his puerility. But at the conclusion of these intermittent and unsatisfactory readings, there were no kind words or thanks for Margaret—she had read so fast or so slow that her poor mother had had little enjoyment. If she stayed at home she was a sad mope, so unlike the dear child that was in heaven—if she went abroad,

she had so little consideration for the stricken and afflicted invalid at home, and was still so unlike the dear departed. Poor Margaret! it is no wonder she was sad.

The summer of which the fading blossoms should bring her seventeenth birthday, was come. At the window of her mother's chamber Margaret sat alone, for the invalid had been busy with reproaches all the morning, and was fallen asleep. The girl was unusually sad—she had been looking across the hills to the dark line of woods that skirted the village graveyard, where the willow trailed, and the now fast-fading violets lay about the modest head-stone. She had been looking to that spot; not as to an awful end, from which to shrink tremblingly away, but rather as to the only spot in which peace, deep and eternal, is to be embraced by the over wearied and lonely. I would not call thee back, lost one! she said—to front again, it may be with unequal strength, the beleaguering hosts that take arms against us at our birth—to suffer, to struggle, to hope, to fear, to falter, to fail, and to die; I would rather unlock the door of thy dark chamber, and cover my eyes forever with the silent whiteness of thy shroud.

Are these strange thoughts for youth and beauty? for she was young, and I remember no face of more loveliness than hers; for myself, I do not think them very strange. Her father, in attending to the increase of his folds, and the gathering of his harvests and the enlargement of his threshing-floors, forgot his child, and her mother, a troubled and troublesome invalid, never spoke to her in any words of tenderness, or called her any gentle names. The fountain of her sisterly affection had been choked with the dust of death, and that stronger feeling, the strongest that attaches mortality to earth, had never touched her heart. A time was very close at hand when she should hear gladness in the song of the harvester that she had never heard, and feel a warmth and joyousness in the sunshine that had drifted before her coldly as the clouds. Love was already brightening in her skies, and a new and beautiful garniture was presently to adorn her world. Now, as she sat, the light fell over the valleys, gilded the hill-tops, shimmered along the meadows, played on the window-sill beneath her eyes, and

sunk among her long, chestnut lock sunheeded. They are small things that make up the sum of human happiness or misery; a smile, or a kind word, may strengthen us for the tasks and duties of the day, more than the fresh airs of summer, more than the shelter of a broad roof, or daintiest viands, or most delicious and inspiring wines. A reproachful glance, any untoward event, a ruthless conviction, falls on the hands like paralysis, on the heart like mildew; and the landscape fades not so much with the slant rains of autumn beating cold against its flowers, as for the presence of any of these.

Beneath the window where Margaret sat, a man was spading the fresh earth, and the peculiar and invigorating odor impregnated all the air. He was singing to himself snatches of old songs:

“’Tis merry, ’tis merry the live-long day
To work—’tis better to work than play;
’Tis better to work and to sing as I,
Than sit with nothing to do, and sigh.”

Her attention was arrested, and she said, as she resumed the task with which she had been occupied, “You are right, old man, sing while you may—there is an end of all our thoughtless singing ere we think.” He had thrown up a ridge of earth against some roots, to protect them from frost, and brushing gray hairs from his forehead, that was wrinkled with care and time, he resumed his labor and the song:

“’Tis merry with singing to earn our bread,
With the beetle below and the lark o’er head
And sunshine around us the live-long day,
For singing and working are better than play.”

“Ah, yes,” said Margaret, smiling and taking up her again neglected work, “it is better than play.” Her mood was becoming more genial from seeing the gardener’s cheerful labor. Presently he was joined by his boy. “Here, take the spade,” said he, and lighting his pipe, with a match and flint he carried in his pocket, he sat down to smoke, while the youth went on with the service, after the manner of his father, yet how differently. He was a wiry lad, with yellow curls blowing over his eyes, and hands like ill-shapen bones, with a warted and brown

skin about them. His eyes were yellowish gray, his complexion, the tint of a blackened rose, and his only clothing a shirt of small-specked calico, and blue cotton trowsers. He wore no shoes, and as he endeavored to force the spade in the ground, constantly bruised and hurt his feet in such way as caused repeated exclamations of vexation, after which he would pause a moment, and look with dissatisfied scowl all about him. Meantime the old man had leaned against the fence of the garden, and with closed eyes seemed to enjoy the fragrant exhalations of his pipe. "Some people have easy times," said the boy, "ding it all!" and walking slyly near his father, set up the spade in the ground, and then, touching it with his hand lightly, caused it to fall and push the pipe from the mouth of the smoker, who, starting from his agreeable reverie, gave a half-reproachful look to the lad, and one of sorrow to the broken pipe, and seizing the spade, resumed his work with more earnestness, and his song with more unction, than before: "It is better to work than play."

Having found release from the labor which he seemed not to love, the boy stole beneath the window, and on a hollow reed began piping a simple air, doubtless for the ear of the fair lady above.

"Ezra," said her sweet voice, as she leaned from the window, "that is a pretty song, but I heard Josiah singing from the garden a little time ago; though his voice was tremulous, he was so tired, the song was more cheerful than yours; and if you will take his place for an hour, and I am sure you will, your song may become happy as his." The boy said not a word, overcome, as it seemed, by such condescension, but gliding away, he took the spade, with some words of apology, from the weary hands of the old man, and began working in good earnest without once saying, "ding it all," a favorite exclamation in which his dissatisfaction usually found vent.

"A pleasant song you have been singing, Josiah," said Margaret, as the old man hobbled by towards his own cottage, "and this is to pay you;" handing him from the window a new pipe—a very pretty one, as Josiah thought—for he looked at it in what seemed a bewilderment of admiration, and said, "No-

body in the sound of the church bell is half so good or half so beautiful as Miss Margaret." "Ah, you must not give me any flattery," she answered, laughingly, "for I have heard that wiser heads than mine have been spoiled thereby, and hereafter I may only be giving you presents for the sake of fair words."

The happy old man went toward his cottage, happy for that he had a new pipe, and also for the new kindness of his son—whom, he thought, some supernatural visitant must have influenced. While working in the garden with earnestness and cheerfulness by no means habitual to him, the ill-natured but simple-minded boy looked now and then at the window, where Margaret was busy with her sewing, humming the words of Josiah—"It is better to work than play." She was probably conscious that the boy was busy beneath the window, but she was so much engrossed, that she did not notice the passing of the young village clergyman on his accustomed walk. Glad to arrest her attention for a moment, even though it were to divert it from himself, Ezra gathered, and threw in at the window a sprig of rue, saying, "Look yonder, Miss Fields." She looked in the direction indicated, and the color came rushing into her cheeks as she did so, for she saw that her glance was observed. The road on which the Fields' cottage was situated, was not the main one, but was what is usually termed a cross-road, for the convenience of out of the way farmers, and it struck into the more frequented thoroughfare, leading to the village on the one hand, and to the city on the other, at the distance of about half a mile westward from the cottage; and on this road, full of dusty travel, stood, at the distance of a quarter of a mile to the south, a large and fashionable house, of very red bricks, and with inside blinds of white, a style of finish of which no other in the whole neighborhood could boast. Here lived Mr. Ralph Middleton, a descendant of one of the royalist families of the Revolution, and strongly tinctured with aristocratic feeling. He kept the best coach in the county, in fact there were but one or two others, and he drove the finest horses, bred the best cattle, and was acknowledged the great man of all that region; and his acquaintance was esteemed even by Deacon White and Doctor Haywood, as an especial honor.

Often I remember of crossing the fields from school to look at the deer in his orchard, and I know now that I felt half ashamed and mortified, that we had only two brown calves and a flock of sheep and lambs in ours. My deference for the Middletons, I am willing to acknowledge, though it humbles me, at this distance of time, to know that anything but honest integrity should have elicited such feeling. I was by no means however so prostrated before them, as were most of my school companions, who were glad to talk with James, the black man, who tended the cows, and rode to the field on a little sorrel poney, to bring them home at night: sometimes carrying little Willie Middleton on the saddle before him. My admiration was never servile, but I can remember that more than one of my playmates would gladly have been deprived of dinner when it chanced to be some nicety to which they were not accustomed, for the hope of giving it at night to Willie Middleton, though he fed it to his dog "Flora," or threw it on the ground.

Sometimes we saw the daughter, Florence Middleton, sitting under the orchard trees, with her book—a beautiful girl, else my childish fancy interpreted amiss her long golden curls, soft blue eyes, and lily complexion. Her dress was always exquisitely tasteful, nor had the soil of labor embrowned her youthful cheek, or hardened her plump little hands, glittering with gems, either of which would have bought any of the petty estates in the neighborhood. I think her disposition must have been exceedingly sweet and amiable, for she sometimes called us to her—a rude and noisy tribe, as we were, and showed us through the garden—to us a fairy land—gathering flowers for us, and telling us their names, which we could not remember, but thought long and curious, and supposed were brought from across the sea. Toward us she acted, though I know not if such were her custom with others, as one confident of ability to please.

Margaret Fields, none of us thought pretty, though from my recollections now, she must have been much the prettier of the two. Her brown hair was always parted smoothly away from her forehead, and her dark eyes had that look of soft and angel gentleness, as if half suffused with coming tears. But her

dress of simple muslin, had none of the style belonging to Florence's, it looked as though we ourselves might wear such an one some day. Then, too, we had seen her in the little cabin of Josiah, when the good dame was disabled with rheumatism or toothache, making bread, or scattering crumbs to the chickens: how could she be either pretty or a fine lady! She was punctual in her attendance at church, where, to our regret, we never saw Florence, for every Sabbath she went in the coach with her father to the city, where, as we heard, the pews were nicely cushioned, the aisles carpeted, and the windows stained in such a way, as to make the light more beautiful than that which streams through sunset clouds.

From the window where Margaret sat so often, reading to her querulous mother, or within her call, the white spire of the village church was distinctly visible. The pastor, at this time, was but lately come to the parish, and in the meanwhile the illness and ill-humor of her mother, had prevented her being in her accustomed place, so that as the boy Ezra threw the rue in her lap, she looked up and saw the young man for the first time. "A fair looking personage, is he not?" she said, as with one ungloved hand between the gilt leaves of a small volume, and one holding a red thistle flower, he passed slowly along—not without more than once glancing at the pretty cottage. The exclamation of the girl was partly to herself, and partly to Ezra, who, leaning upon his spade, was gazing with admiration first at the young man and then at the girl. The poor boy seemed to feel the vast distance between himself and the clergyman, and could not repress the exclamations of "Ding it all! blame!" Then, as if some sudden impulse seized him he threw aside his spade, and glancing at Margaret, walked hastily in the direction taken by the young man. When he had approached him within a few steps, he slackened his pace, and observing him with the jealous scrutiny of a spy, seemed desirous himself of remaining unobserved. Ezra was selfish, for though he could work with the most persevering energy, when the profits of his labors accrued solely to himself, he declined exertion for the benefit of his parents. Nothing but an inordinate love of money could overcome his natural indolence, and for hours

sometimes he would lie basking in the sun, with no occupation but his thoughts, the nature of which may be guessed from the fact of his position being chosen generally within sight of Margaret's window. The love of the moth for the star! In the chamber of the cottage, where he slept, he had picked the plaster from the wall, close by the head of the bed, making a place sufficiently large for the concealment of his purse, which was, in fact, the foot of an old gray stocking, in which were hoarded all his little earnings, even from the first shilling given him by Deacon White, for dropping corn, to the bright gold dollar he received for the recovery of Mr. Middleton's stray cow. After the careful survey of the young clergyman, which I have described, Ezra went straight to his humble chamber, and taking the purse from its concealment, counted the treasure, with a sort of chuckle, and replacing it again, walked the floor, as in agitation. All that night was sleepless—passed counting his money or walking restlessly to and fro. But day had scarcely dawned ere, with the strange purse in one hand and a luncheon of bread and meat in the other, he was on his way to the city. Poor boy: he was about to do a very foolish thing. Under the window of Margaret he paused for a moment, and looked reverently up, and then breaking into an exultant song, walked briskly forward.

Time went by—the bright morning sun had more than once blackened the vine and rose leaves which the night had previously stiffened with frost, but with the fading of nature came into the heart of Margaret new light, and the haze, dimming the blue air of summer, seemed only to make the world more beautiful.

The young minister had learned to end his walk at the cottage. If, however, he passed sometimes, extending it to the thick woods beyond, merely to see him and know that he was well, and that he thought of her, at least, was beautiful sunshine in her shady place. Occasionally, too, Margaret accompanied him in these walks, and what delightful seasons they were to her—how she treasured the flowers thus gathered for her, for here and there, in some sheltered nook, a hardy flower might still be found. Every word was stored in her heart, no matter how trivial—whether of the sunset, or the sea—about the low

earth, or the high heavens. Yet there were words sometimes uttered more dear to her than any suggested by the presence or the aspect of the silent world ; nor were his smile, or the tones of his tremulous and variable voice, forgotten ; but whether grave or gay, mournful or encouraging, all were remembered and referred to, afterwards.

Yearning for sympathetic kindness, uneducated in art, and simple in nature as Margaret was, is it any marvel that she put her hand in that of the young clergyman with the same confidence she had previously felt in interviews with the gray-haired man, who had given to her forehead the baptismal seal ? We expect the tendrils of the young vine to clasp themselves about the nearest support ; we expect the flower to unfold itself to the kiss of the sun, and to blush beneath the breathing of the wind ; and the heart—to yield to the influence of kindness.

One evening when the young man had spoken more freely than was his wont, of himself—of his past history, which had not been unmingled with sorrow—and the fountain in her bosom was stirred till tears washed the roses from her cheeks, roses which his first kiss called back again, more brightly beautiful than before—as they lingered over the parting, speaking little, but one, at least, feeling much, the dull rumble of wheels over the grass-grown road arrested their attention, and presently the gay equipage of Mr. Middleton was seen approaching. Very proud looked the coachman, of his glittering buttons and the bright band on his hat ; consequentially complaisant looked Mr. Middleton, leaning on the golden head of his cane from the corner of his coach ; gay and bewitchingly smiling looked Florence, as with curls flowing from her little coquettish bonnet, she joyously kissed the tips of her white kid gloves to Margaret, though their salutations had been limited to the simplest civility hitherto. “ Beautiful ! is she not beautiful ! ” exclaimed the young man, with enthusiasm, as the carriage rolled away. “ Very,” echoed Margaret ; but the fervor that had been in her tone was gone, the eloquent glow was faded from her cheek, and the tears she strove to repress, came with tell-tale fulness to her eyes : this time only the winds kissed them away—the eyes of the clergyman were turned in the direction of the receding coach.

“But what were you saying?” asked Margaret, after a moment’s silence, and putting down her heart with a strong effort.

“Nothing,” answered the young man, mechanically; and, with an abrupt “good-evening,” he walked hastily toward his own home; while alone, in the deepening shadows, and as one might have watched the folding of the white wings away from Eden, stood the girl. She was recalling their interrupted conversation :

“Let us cast away, beloved,
In the future, all the past.”

These were his last words, and on the hope they inspired, she was trying to lean—a frail support—with the parting gulf between them. Youth is buoyant, and sleep, that loves best the eyes that are unsullied with a tear, sometimes also visits those that are so sullied; and, under the influence of bright dreams, new hopes awakened in the heart of Margaret, as daffodils under the April rain.

All day she looked forward to the twilight, thinking of every endearing word and look of the last meeting, and shutting from her thoughts, as much as possible, the coldness and abruptness of its close. At sunset, she sat beneath one of the trees at the door, not to watch its fading splendors, or to wait the white trembling of the evening star, but to listen for the echo of a coming step. She did not have long to wait.

She had made her toilet with unusual care, for though she wore the accustomed dress of simple muslin, some bright leaves of the brier-rose shone among her chestnut braids, and the shawl of crimson and orange, wrapt about her dainty bare arms, concealed not the blue ribbons upon her neck and wrists.

Now and then as the gust rose, the yellow leaves dropped in her lap, and a bird sometimes skimmed close to the ground, very near; but not gust, nor dropping leaves, nor skimming bird, did the maiden heed. Toward where the village spire whitened against the purple clouds, she looked, how earnestly, and the careless step of the passing traveller made her heart beat louder and quicker than it could have beat at the sudden bursting of a tempest. Presently, in the direction of her gaze, the figure of a darkly-clad man is seen approaching slowly, and

by the sudden burning on her cheek, she recognises the minister. The beating of her heart is like a death-watch—the shadow of a fear crosses her thought—she knows not why: will his greeting be cordial, or sad, or cold? Kind, surely, else he would not have come; and so she rises and walks forward to meet him, for he has almost reached the turning of the lane. “His head is bent down,” she says, “but he will see me, in a moment more, and quicken his step.” Does he see her? the hapless sinking of her heart tells her Yes, and yet it would seem not, for he has quite passed the lane, and is giving his walk a direction which, till now, it had never received. Shall she walk forward, or return? Hesitating, she does neither, but stands as one stricken into stone, following with her eyes the receding form of him who turns not even once to look on her. The way he has chosen is dusty, and not so pleasant as the green and quiet lane; but Ralph Middleton’s garden borders the dusty road, and the fair Florence walks there often at twilight. What need is there of farther explanation? Days went by, and the sunsets were just as beautiful as before, but not to the eyes of Margaret—her walks were alone. After ten or twelve days, as she one evening sat on the mossy log in the edge of the thick wood, where she had so often sat before, watching the clouds or the stars, in his dear presence, she was surprised in her sad meditation, by his approach. He smiled as he drew near, and extended his hand with more familiarity than formerly, and seating himself beside her on the mossy log, talked gaily and lightly of a thousand things, but in a different vein from that in which he had ever talked before. His manner was now that of a dear, kind, darling brother, but nothing more—in fact he denied impliedly that anything more had ever been intended—and he spoke of the future, but did not say

“Let us cast away, beloved,
In the future all the past.”

No—nothing of that sort—but of the time when he should have a home—just such an one as the poetic mind of Margaret might picture—and that one of the chief pleasures he hoped for was in receiving her as a frequent guest. “You are growing thin,

my dear friend," he said, patting her on the cheek in a patronizing way; "you seclude yourself too much: how I wish I could persuade you to condescend a little from your dignity, and associate with your modest little neighbor yonder." She did not look up, but she felt that he pointed in the direction of the Middleton mansion, and that that was the unkindest thing of all. She said nothing, however, and the recreant continued, as though every word were healing balm, instead of a piercing thorn: "Really, Miss Fields, Florence is the most charming little creature in the world; I am sure you would love her if you knew her, so perfectly does she realize my ideal of all that is good and beautiful." "Doubtless she is all you say," answered Margaret; "but I am not one to win back love, however much I may give; and for my own peace, it is best that I make no overtures." "Miss Fields must not so depreciate herself," replied the young man: "Florence speaks almost every evening of the black-eyed cottage girl, and wishes she could be persuaded to join our walks." He had always said Margaret and Miss Middleton, until to-night.

Thick and fast fell the shadows, and the poor girl was glad of their fall, for she felt the blood go down from her cheek and the waters coming up to her eyes. Father! there is need of all thy infinite mercies for him who holds the heartstrings of another with a careless hand.

"And so I have found you at last," said a familiar voice, breaking the silence that was becoming embarrassing, and Ezra stood before the young people bowing awkwardly; but as he recognised the clergyman, he could not avoid his habitual exclamation, of "Ding it all!" He then, in his blandest manner, told Margaret he had been searching for her everywhere—that his mother, or the old woman, as he called her, had a terrible fit of the rheumatism, and that she wished Miss Margaret to come to her cabin, more for the comfort of her sweet smile than for anything else.

A moment afterwards Margaret was on the way towards the light that glimmered from the little window of the cabin in the edge of the woods across the fields. Ezra walked at her side

in happy silence, feeling very much as if he had borne the prize from a hundred lovers, and Margaret was too much engaged with her own thoughts to speak to, or notice him. It was not of the first slight swerving of the heart, that words are powerless to express, that she mused, but—

“Of all that fills the hearts of friends
When first they feel, with secret pain,
Henceforth their lives have separate ends,
And never can be one again.”

And as the minister sat alone, did he watch the receding figure of the girl, and as the pale, rebuking face of the moon looked down on him from between the withering boughs, did he reproach himself for the blight cast on a young life? Alas, no! “I never told her I loved her,” he said, and thus satisfied his conscience, if it whispered any unpleasant remonstrance; and of the thousand nameless things that have more meaning than words, he said, “If she misconstrued them, am I to blame?” But the meeting and the parting with Margaret, their brief conversation, and the reflections it caused, of whatever sort, were speedily forgotten in the gorgeous lights and gay music and witching smiles found in Ralph Middleton’s parlor.

“Fate links strange contrasts, and the scaffold’s gloom
Is neighbored by the altar.”

Alone, in her melancholy, sat Margaret Fields, watching by the bedside of the mumbling old woman, the sands of whose glass were nearly run. Ezra, at her entreaty, had during the early evening retired to his own room, but by the constant creaking of the floor overhead, and the almost perpetual shutting and opening of a trunk, she knew that he was not gone there to sleep. Near midnight, he crept down into the room where she was, and by various motions and signs and sighs, contrived to make her aware of his presence. She felt that he was there, but rocking to and fro by the bedside, and watching the pained expression of the invalid, and listening to and soothing her complaints, hour after hour went by without her having noticed him. At last broke forth the petulant exclamation, “Ding it all—blame! won’t you see a body’s new things, ever?”

“Certainly, Ezra: have you got new things?” said Margaret, smiling, but the smile changed to positive laughter when turning round she saw the unlooked for metamorphosis. “These things are what I got for what I had in my old sock-foot,” said the boy, drawing himself to his full height, and distorting his features to a sort of grin; “and I guess even the preacher would be glad to swap.”

“I will dare say,” answered Margaret, and she now saw that the new dress in which he was arrayed was a very close imitation of that worn by the young clergyman, and that he held in one hand a small gilt volume between the leaves of which two of his long fingers were slipt. Poor mistaken youth! yet he did not look like the village pastor. All that fall, and till the white snow sifted down on his new clothes, he walked through the lane with the volume in his hand in the hope of being seen by Margaret. Sometimes he would stop at the door and communicate the last intelligence he had heard in reference to the marriage of Florence and the minister, concluding always with the comforting assurance that every body said they would be married very shortly.

Last autumn was the tenth since the young clergyman came to the village near which lived Margaret Fields and Florence Middleton, and both are living still, but Florence has for a long time written her changed name with the title of a matron, while our heroine is still Margaret Fields. In the village graveyard where she first wept there are two more graves, and he who was so busy in laying up treasures for himself on earth, is gone, taking nothing with him, and the last complaints of the querulous invalid are hushed. By their deaths, Margaret became heir to the estate, which long since passed from her hands, and is now fallen sadly to decay. The elegant church, and the plain but substantial school house for the education of poor and orphan children, speak volumes in praise of her virtues, who became, not a useless misanthrope, for the crushing of one hope, though never so dear, but, turning aside very meekly to the by-paths of duty, bears steadfastly still her cross.

In her white cheek the crimson burns as faint
 As doth the red in some cold star's chaste beam,
 The tender meekness of the pitying saint,
 Lends all her life the beauty of a dream.

Thus doth she more serenely day by day,
 Loving and loved, but passion cannot move
 The young heart that has wrapt itself away
 In the soft mantle of a Savior's love.

The young clergyman, now no longer very young, is the pastor of a wealthy church in the city, and his wife is what is termed a fine lady. Nevertheless, he goes often from the noise and bustle of the thoroughfare, and the pride and glitter of his loftier home, to the humbler scene of his early labors. He requires change of air and new sensations, he says, and in a neat little cottage—half-hidden among the vines that climb about the windows and over the eaves—humble, but sufficient for all the wants of the solitary inmate, he is frequently a guest, and sometimes, as he partakes of the bowl of sweet milk and delicious white bread, listening to the cheerfulness and wisdom that drop from the lips which perhaps he remembers to have kissed, he says in a half-sad tone, "How I wish Florence were more like you!"

As for Ezra, I know not whether he be living or dead; but probably he has long been in the earth in which it was his living lot to toil. And the reader will be glad to know that his thoughts were soon diverted from the unhappy channel in which they at one time flowed—partly by the beautiful red silk purse full of glittering coins, which Margaret bestowed on him, in lieu of the sock, for which he continually pined, in spite of the broadcloth in which he was "appareled as became the brave,"—partly by the stoppage in the neighborhood of a travelling menagerie, of which one of the most ferocious and unmanageable of the beasts, became surprisingly attached to him, so that he was hired as its keeper; and, mounted on the box in which his new interest was conveyed from place to place, dressed in his new clothes, and whistling Yanke Doodle, he departed from his native village forever. He was afterwards heard of, from one of the Southern cities, as having obtained

complete mastery over his charge, being able to enter the cage with the most easy confidence imaginable, and promptly awing any belligerent propensity, with "Ding it all!" He was completely satisfied, and the proprietors thought him one of the chief attractions of their caravan.

The good old wife of Josiah has passed away, but he still lives, strong and content, smoking his pipe—the same one he has had these ten years. He makes all the gardens in the neighborhood, but people say he takes especial pains with that of Margaret, for no other in the whole village is half so pretty as hers. However, Mrs. Troost generally concludes by saying, "Some people are born lucky," to which Margaret smilingly says, "Yes." Little does our old and ill-contented friend suspect—

"She has herself a wound concealed."

THE PHANTOM HUNTER.

A stormy night in December, just such a time as makes the red lights in the homestead windows doubly significant of comfort, as perchance we catch in passing a glimpse of the fireside group, or the tea-table with its steaming cups, short cakes, and dish filled to the brim with golden honey, to say nothing of the ample ball of yellow butter, or of the great pitcher of new milk.

The sun, whose warmth was scarcely felt, even while in the blue middle heavens, has been down an hour, and from the edges of the barn roof and the ends of the pendant boughs the icicles are shining again, rough and ridged with the drops that melted in the bright noontide.

On the sides of the hills, sloping away from the wind, the flocks and their young are huddled closely; may the winds be tempered to them, for the night is cold! and the cattle gather under the sheds and about the stacks: that is, the most peaceably disposed—there are some that lean their horns into forbidden enclosures, and steal now and then a mouthful of wheat or rye, which, weather beaten and rusty as it is, doubtless is sweeter to them than the fragrant hay strewn all about the yard. Neither instinct in beast nor reason in man is strong enough to divest of their charm whatever things are obtained with difficulty or péril. I have no quarrel to make with nature; were it not so, what sluggards we should become! And were it not for this, too, the destiny of Lydia Heath might have been very different.

A winter night, I said: an hour after sunset; gusts of wind sweep across the northern hills, through the withered woods and

die away over the southern slopes. It is not so bitter cold that the owl, with all his feathers, is chilled, indeed, but he keeps snugly muffled in the hollow stub, and comes not once forth to fill the valley with his desolate cry: perhaps that no one is to-night wandering near his sacred bower; perhaps that there is no moon to which he may complain, for one dull mass of leaden clouds spreads over all the sky. And the snow has been steadily sifting down since the clock in the village steeple struck three, and the urchins, out at play in the school-yard, tossed up their caps and clapped their hands for joy: perhaps they might get a sleigh ride, at any rate they could slide down hill, and chase the little snow birds here and there; but without defining their feelings, they were happy, from a new sensation. The snow is being heaped on the tops of the fences, on the boughs of the trees; it blows against the face of the traveller, who trudges along with his bundle on the end of a stick which is swung over his shoulder; there is even a ridge of snow on his staff, so steadily he carries it, and all over the rim of his hat; he walks as one very tired, but as though he had much of his journey to accomplish yet and did not mean to stop till it was finished. "How far is it to Clovernook?" he asks of a boy who is riding past without any saddle, and who holds in one hand a jug; "To Clovernook, did you say, mister?" the boy says, with an impish sort of look; the traveller nods assent, and he replies, "Just as far again as *half*;" and striking his horse with the heels of his boots, the animal starts forward, throwing the snow in the face of the tired questioner. He looks discouraged, sorrowful for a moment, and then, with his head bent forward, to keep the snow as much as possible from his face, walks on till, at the foot of a long ascent called Jonathan's Hill, he reaches the great oak. Close about the trunk the ground is bare, for the gray leaves hang thick on the boughs and interrupt the snow. A little higher than his head there is a guide-board nailed on this tree—white, with black letters—and straining his eyes, he endeavors to read the direction, but it is too dark. Before him it looks desolate, for on either side of the road there are thick woods, and just on the slope of the hill, and bordering the forest and the western roadside, he can see

some old fences, partly broken or fallen, and the pale looming of burial stones. It is a lonely scene, as I said, but he is weary, and placing his bundle on the ground, he sits down to rest.

In the distance he hears the rumble of the stage coach—how hollow it sounds as the horses trot across the bridge; and now it comes nearer and nearer, so that the glimmer of the lamps is seen; and now it is very near; the two forward horses are white—how they toss their manes, and how high they hold their heads! yet they are tired, gay and full of life as they seem, and the driver pauses at the foot of the hill, that they may recover themselves before the effort necessary to its ascent. From the buffalo robe that is wrapt about him, he shakes the snow, and claps his hands together, once or twice, to lessen their numbness; he has stopt but a minute, but the travellers inside seem impatient, and one and another head is thrust forth from the window, and several voices ask what is the matter? “Make yourselves easy,” he says, “this is a haunted hill, and I must give my horses a little rest, so that they may get over it fast as possible.”

“I perceive a ghost at the foot of this tree,” cries one of the passengers, pointing to the oak, for the coach lamp shines on the pedestrian, who sits within a circle of snow.

“Driver, keep your eye to the mail bags,” says one; “My baggage all safe?” another; “Drive on, drive on!” a third, to none of which requests or questions responds the lord of the four horses, but gently brings his whip-lash down on the flank of one of the leaders, and with a sudden plunge, and then a falling backward again, there is a general strain on the traces, and the team goes forward, at a steady and even pace—while the passengers enter into a thousand speculations about an exhausted and harmless traveller: “Some drunken fellow, I suspect,” one says; “No, no, he is some evil disposed person, evidently,” another, “else why didn’t he speak? he must have heard us talking of him;” “Perhaps,” a third joins in, “he has perished in the snow-storm, or he may have been murdered, or even spirited from his way: who knows? this is a haunted hill; didn’t you say so, driver?” and the questioner put his head from the window and laughed incredulously. “Don’t freeze us

all to death!" cries out a burly old man in one corner, buttoning up his overcoat. "Don't you find the window annoyingly cold, Miss?" inquires a small gentleman in a frockcoat and black gloves, to the lady next him. "Not at all, sir," she replies, "the fresh air is agreeable to me." "Well, ma'am," says an old woman with a bundle in her lap, "I wish them that likes it had enough of it." "Will thee have my cloak?" asks a quiet looking gentleman in drab, "and then thee will be pleased, and thee will be pleased," nodding to both women. "Don't let my preference inconvenience any one," the young lady remarks in a singularly sweet voice, and the old one reaches for the cloak in silence. "I should think there was chance enough to freeze with the window closed," says the first speaker, shrugging his shoulders. "I wonder how the deuce this chanced to be called Jonathan's Hill?" put in a little wiry man, probably with intent of changing the conversation; and a gentleman with a long red neck, a clumsy hat very much over his eyes, and a yellow handkerchief smelling strongly of snuff, responds as follows:

"When my father came to this country, sir, some thirty-five years ago, this was about as rough a piece of road as you could find: full of stumps, without any bridges, and never having been graded at all, you can imagine, sir, something of its condition. And this wood was then so dense that it was almost impossible for a man to find his way through, and infested with all sorts of wild beasts, as you may suppose. I have heard my father say, he shot a bear once, just where Squire Higgins's barn stands:" "Ah, indeed!" interrupted one or two persons, though probably no one in the coach knew that there was such a squire or barn; "Yes," continued the narrator, "right where the barn of Squire Higgins now stands, my father shot a bear. I have heard him tell the story to Uncle Mike, a number of times." "Is it possible!" said the nearest listener, by way of courtesy. "Yes, I've heard him tell Uncle Mike more than once," went on the man with the snuff scented handkerchief, "and it's only last week I heard him tell it when Eunice was at our house." "And was this called Jonathan's road then?" asked some one, by way of recalling him; and having been brought back, he resumed: "When Jonathan

Sumner built his new house, he had a great many hands in his employ—mostly wild young men they were, but Jonathan was as much a boy as any of them ; so I have heard my father say ; and once I remember he told tailor John so, when tailor John came to measure him for a new coat ; and another time, when I went with him to Irish Patrick's to buy some steers, he told Irish Patrick the same thing. Well, Jonathan proposed to his men a hunting expedition into these woods ; so, early one September morning they set out, and dividing into parties of two or three, pursued whatever game they chanced to find, till towards sunset, at which time it was agreed that the party comprising the largest number should fire their guns in quick succession, for the calling together of the straggling parties, with so much of their game as they might be able to carry. A fire was to be kindled, supper prepared, and the night passed in true hunter style. The party of which Jonathan made one, could not prevent him from straying apart, and in spite of repeated remonstrances, he strolled farther and farther, until they finally lost sight of him, and at night, when the signal was made, party after party came in, but no Jonathan. They were a jovial set, as may be supposed, and for some time felt no alarm. A log-heap fire was kindled, supper cooked, with many a jest, and after some little delay, eaten with keen enjoyment. Cloaks and blankets were spread on the dry leaves under a large tree, and with the game strewed all about, and swinging from the branches of trees, they were about to lie down for the night, when it was proposed by some one to fire another signal. It was accordingly done, and contrary to expectation a reply was heard in a minute afterward. ' Ah, no fear of Jonathan, I knew,' said one to another, and the embers were heaped together, and a fresh surloin of venison was laid on the coals in order to give him good cheer on his arrival.

"The mirth, which was flagging, grew louder again, and the red sparkles ran far along the darkness, but not so far as the laughter. At last the steak was done, and over-done, and the flame flickering among the ashes, but Jonathan was not there. They began to think they had been deceived as to the response to their signal ; ' It didn't sound to me precisely like a gun,' said

one, 'Nor to me,' said another; and so it was concluded to fire again. Very eagerly they listened, but the sound had no sooner fairly subsided, than the answer came clear and distinct, and all, this time, professed to recognise the tone of Jonathan's piece. But, nevertheless, after waiting half an hour, they began to feel less positive, and another half hour was consumed in telling stories of phantom ships and phantom guns, at the expiration of which time the woods rung with a third signal, followed, like the preceding ones, with a quick return; and this time it was pretty generally agreed, that it was not Jonathan's gun at all, and that he was doubtless murdered by savages, who responded to the signals, to delay search. This question speedily woke up a spirit of bravery, and all the company equipt themselves, and set out to ransack that portion of the woods whence the sound seemed to proceed. When the spot, or somewhere near it, was supposed to be gained, another gun was fired, and to the astonishment of all, the answering gun seemed just as far from them as before. Some of the more timid, now proposed to return to the camp, and even to get out of the woods if possible, but others vowed that it would be a great shame to forsake a distressed companion, whom they were probably even then very near, and the search was renewed, but though it was kept up for hours, they came no nearer to the mysterious gun of which they heard the reports.

"About midnight, the moon rose full and bright, and just at the foot of this hill, where old Major Hays is buried, the party, tired, discouraged, and half afraid, it may be, struck into the road, or all the road there then was—a sort of trail through the wilderness. 'Come, boys, let us fire a farewell signal,' said one, emboldened by the moonlight, and a certain knowledge of his whereabouts. 'No, no,' was replied, 'for I'll be shot, if he hasn't been playing us a trick after all; just look there!' and he pointed to a man, walking slowly, a little in advance of them, whom all were ready to swear, was Jonathan Sumner. Very slowly he walked, and as one in great pain; 'but he sees us,' they said, 'and is seeking to palm on us a new trick; let us not seem to notice him;' so, for a time, they walked as slowly as the man in advance, but at length, they grew tired of their

pace, and after a whispered consultation, resolved to overtake him, but to express no surprise at meeting him thus, nor suffer him to know they had felt the least uneasiness about him; and thus, they thought, he will have had his pains for nothing. 'Haloo! Jonathan, won't you wait a little for us?' called one; but Jonathan, with his gun pointed over his shoulder, made no reply, but dragged himself forward as before, on which they quickened their pace, with intent to overtake him as soon as possible. But though Jonathan was so near, as they protested, that they could see his gun distinctly, and the color of his coat, on first mending their pace, they walked five minutes without coming in the least nearer. Seeing this they began to run, and at the end of five minutes were no nearer than before. Next, they sat down, resolved to baffle him in some way, but after waiting half an hour, the mysterious man was observed to be standing stock still, precisely the same distance from them. Frightened not a little, they proceeded again, but whether they walked fast or slow, it mattered not, the phantom, or Jonathan, or whatever it was, kept just as far away from them during the whole journey home. Nearly opposite the new house, on which they were at work, their attention was withdrawn from the strange sight, by perceiving that a bright light burned in one of the chambers, and on looking again, he was no where to be seen; nor" concluded the story-teller, "has he ever been heard of till now, and in this way, Jonathan's Hill got its name."

"Is Mr. Timothy Sumner any way related to this strange person?" asked the young lady who liked the air. "Only a brother!" was the reply, and the speaker laughed, evidently thinking he had said a witty thing. "And does the brother inherit the estate?" asked the young lady. The gentleman said, he didn't know, as to that, but that Timothy lived in Jonathan's house, because other folks were afraid of the haunted chamber, and he added, "Timothy has a son, a good deal like his uncle, from all accounts."

On hearing this, she asked the entertaining passenger if he would be kind enough to stop the coach at the house of Mr. Timothy Sumner. "No," he said, "I stop at Uncle David's, but I'll speak to the driver," and looking from the window, he re-

quested that personage to "stop at Tim's, without fail," and added, "you may just leave me at Uncle David's." Reseating himself, he saw, he said, "an individual, a little in the rear of the coach, and it might be Jonathan's ghost, for all he knew." There was a general strain to look out, and one devil-me-care youth, called, "Ha, Jonathan Sumner! is that you, or your ghost?"

"It's me, myself," exclaimed the man, "and a great many years it is, since I went down this hill on the famous hunt."

They had now gained the summit of the hill, and the passengers, certainly, a little startled, were not sorry to hear the smart crack of the whip, which sent the horses forward, almost to the extent of their speed. There was a general buzz of animated conversation, one asking, how soon they would be at Clovernook; another wondering whether they would stop there to supper; another, how soon they would reach the next station, &c.; but the young lady remained silent and thoughtful. Presently the stage stopt, and the gentleman with the snuff-scented handkerchief, made his exit.

"I hope Uncle David's folks will be glad to see him," said the youth, who had spoken to the ghost, and before the laughter had fully subsided, the reins were drawn up again, and the driver called out, "Is there a passenger inside for Tim Sumners?" and hearing the low-voiced response of a lady, he leapt to the ground, and brushing aside the snow with his boot, assisted her to alight, for coach-drivers are not without gallantry. At the open gate, stood an elderly man with an umbrella over his head, and holding a lantern, who received her with old fashioned courtesy. The snow was still falling fast, but a path had been cleared from the front gate to the piazza, and lights were burning in various parts of the house—one, which the young lady was sorry to see, in an upper chamber. "All right!" said the driver, having deposited the handbox within the gate, and the coach rattled on again, while the gentleman conducted his charge into the house, asking her, by the way, if she were not very cold, how long the coach had been in coming up, &c.—unimportant, but manifesting a kindly interest.

LYDIA HEATH AT THE SUMNERS.

THE door opened at once on the ancient-looking parlor into which Timothy Sumner introduced his young guest. Split sticks of hickory mixed with small gnarled boughs of maple and elm were blazing in the deep, wide fire-place, and the red light flickered and danced on the opposite wall. On the high carved mantel, of walnut, ticked the clock, surmounted with curious gilt images, and its lower front ornamented with the picture of a mansion, having a great many white columns and red windows, before which were three very tall green trees.

On either side of the clock was a small profile cut in ink-black paper, one of a male and the other of a female figure: the latter supposed by the young lady to represent the departed Mrs. Sumner, and the former to counterfeit Timothy himself. The portion of the wall below the windows was faced with walnut, carved like the mantel, and the doors were of the same material, and correspondingly finished; the carpet was of a sombre sort of check, and the other furniture of such dark and antique patterns as are only found in old-fashioned country houses: but the room was relieved from looking gloomy by the pure whiteness of the ceiling and the remainder of the wall, the pots of flowers, Jerusalem cherry-trees, and Jacob's ladders, though they were, and the warm ruddy glow of the fire-light. The great brass andirons were polished almost to whiteness; how they glittered and shone! Lydia Heath could see the tiny reflection of her face in them, as she sat before the hearth awaiting the coming of Judith and Maria, whom their father was gone to apprise of her arrival. While thus alone, she heard a sound as of some one stamping the snow off

his feet, followed by a loud rap on the door of the adjoining room, and then joyous exclamations, "Can this be Timothy? God bless you! have I lived to see you!" and the like. But Timothy manifested no surprise, certainly no joy: the tones of his voice remaining cold and calm, a little lower than was their wont, perhaps. The new comer was shortly removed from the room first entered, so that Lydia heard no more, and the ladies very soon after made their appearance.

Judith, the elder, was perhaps thirty-five: tall, dark and stout. Her eyes were very black, and her hair of the same tone, except the silver threads, which knots of ribbon and other furbelows could no longer conceal. Her nose was the prominent feature of her face—the forehead and chin receding in such way as to render it not precisely an angle, but something in that way. Her feet and hands were larger than her figure, large as it was, seemed to demand: so that, it may readily be imagined, her claims to regard for personal beauty must have been exceedingly slight. Notwithstanding this, however, there was that in her air and manner which procured for her aristocratic pretensions ready recognition: for Timothy Sumner, be it known, was not only the wealthiest man in the country, but he could trace his genealogy much farther back than most of his neighbors, farther even, I suspect, than Mr. Middleton. Maria, ten or twelve years younger than her sister, was in some sort her counterpart, but in a softer way. Her hair was of a dark brown, but without the silver streaks, and was worn in half curls about her cheeks, which retained all the plumpness they ever possessed, and carnation enough to show that there was life in them, but not any more. She was not so tall nor so stout as Judith, and altogether was more approachable and familiar, though for her soul she would have neither talked loud nor fast.

Mrs. Sumner had been dead for many years, but when living had been the pattern woman of the neighborhood: a cap or dress could scarcely be in any degree of taste if not modelled after hers, and unless the judgment of Timothy were sadly at fault, she had possessed more beauty and pride than all her family combined. He had been, during her life, a faithful spouse, nor

did he ever, after her death, lean in the least toward another, though never so much tempted by the smiles of the ingenious and wise widows who continually beset him.

At church he was neighbored all round by ladies whom his friends told him were covetable matches. If he went to the meadow to assist black Cato a little, because of the storm that was coming up, the Widow Dartman was sure to see him from her window, and cross the field to know if her cow had not broken into his enclosures ; and if he went to town, Mrs. Spikes would like to go, if he would be so kind as to find room for her in his chaise ; and among his in-town acquaintances there was more than one lady who would think it quite a charity, if Mr. Sumner would allow her to come out to his house, just for a day or two, to inhale the pure country air. Among this number must be reckoned the Widow Heath. Judith and Maria were expected to make her house their home when they came to the city ; and she would send Lydia out to pass a week with them, that they might feel no hesitancy about it. Lydia, of course was glad to go, though perfectly artless in the matter. Mrs. Heath was possessed of considerable wealth, so that what ever her motives, they were not mercenary ; at least it would not be reasonable to suppose they were. But, for some cause, she was one of the admirers of Mr. Sumner ; perhaps her heart was yet susceptible ; who knows ?

Young women in the country must needs have some acquaintances in town, else how should they ever get the fashions ? so the overtures of Mrs. Heath were cordially met, and after due preliminaries the stage horn sounded one December afternoon in front of Mrs. Heath's handsome mansion, and Lydia having been told to make herself useful and agreeable, especially to Mr. Sumner, with satchel and trunk was helped into the coach.

And now we may return to the parlor, where we left her, seated before the great fire, with Judith and Maria. She had been accustomed to the city all her life, but, notwithstanding, she had always felt an instinctive love of the country, and her spirits were now exhilarated with a wild sense of dawning freedom. Gaily she spoke of every thing ; even the snow-storm served only to make it more cheerful within ; and as she sat before the

large fire, now and then catching a glimpse of her face in the shining brass andirons, she felt that she should like to stay there for ever. But though she really was so happy, and chatted in so lively a manner, a thought of the haunted chamber obtruded on her, occasionally, and another vague dream of a pleasanter nature. Had Mr. Timothy Sumner really a son? if so, what was his name, and how did he look? She could not think him like Judith; and was he old or young? but she scarcely admitted the possibility of his being old; she rather thought he was younger than Maria. Very glad was she to hear the preparations for tea, in the next room; she would see him then, she thought, and perhaps the new comer too, certainly, if he were Uncle Jonathan, as she half suspected.

At last Dinah, the colored maid, thrust her good-natured face within the door, and announced to Missis Judith, that tea was in readiness. The curiosity of the young girl was all alive, and shaking back her brown curls, and saying laughingly that she for one, should do justice to the tea, she followed the stately Judith, looking something like a sunbeam in the edge of a cloud: for she was slight, fond of talking, and her face was illumined always with inward cheerfulness. Maria, neither so dignified nor so silent as her sister, could accommodate herself in some measure to the volatile and gay Lydia; but the child-like simplicity of her manner, and the mirthfulness of her laughter and conversation were shocking in a degree, even to her. Nevertheless, the sisters could not fail to perceive that Lydia was really well bred, and that she belonged to an ancient and wealthy family was past a doubt. Therefore a thousand things were excused in her, which they would have condemned in a daughter of Deacon Whitfield or of Mr. Troost, or Mr. Tompkins.

Miss Judith did the honors of the table; opposite her sat her father, precise and proud, but with such qualities that one could not help loving him; at one side Maria took her place, and at the other was the chair for Lydia. No other persons made their appearance.

The man in the coach must have been mistaken, thought Lydia; and turning to Mr. Sumner, she asked him whether he

knew such a man—describing him as well as she could, and relating his manner of talking of his relations and friends, as though they were known to every body; not forgetting, in conclusion, to tell that he stopt at “Uncle David’s.” The story of Jonathan’s Hill, discretion prevented her saying any thing about, though she mentioned incidentally that the strange gentleman talked incessantly while they were coming up the hill; “Jonathan’s Hill, I believe they called it,” she said, glancing around the table.

“Yes, yes, a curious sort of fellow, I know him very well,” replied Mr. Sumner, in a more hurried manner than was his custom; and for once, (it became thereafter quite a frequent occurrence) the color came into the thin cheek of the elder sister.

“I should think him perfectly honest,” continued Lydia.

“Strictly so, strictly so,” said Mr. Sumner; “and you say he talked all the time you were coming up the hill; what did he have to enlighten you all about?”

“Oh! I hardly know what,” Lydia replied; but though she bent her head low, the curls could not quite cover her blushes, so conscious was she of the falsehood she uttered. But rallying presently, she added, “He told us in what spot his father shot a bear, a long time ago, and a good many other things;” and in saying this, she partly atoned, as she thought, for what she had first stated.

All that evening she marvelled whether Mr. Sumner really had a son; she could not understand how the man could have been mistaken, as he seemed to know the family so well; that he was honest, Mr. Sumner himself had told her; but if there were such a young man, why did she not see him at tea? and why was no mention made of him?

While she thus meditated, Maria took up a child’s apron, and began trimming it with lace. A sudden thought suggested itself: the son and brother was married, and the apron was for one of his children: the most natural thing in the world—why had she not thought of it before? To make assurance doubly sure, she said, seeming to admire the work, “You have no little brother or sister, have you?”

Maria smiled, saying, "I have no little brother, but I have a big one, and this is for his child."

"Oh, yes, yes," answered Lydia, "what a pretty pattern!" And shortly afterwards, complaining of being tired, she went, after the guidance of Judith, to her chamber. She did not feel quite so happy as she had before; she could not imagine why, and for a long while kept tossing and turning; she could never sleep so well in a strange place. On the morrow, however, she recovered all her cheerfulness, and ran from room to room, and out of doors and in, like a child. She had settled the query about the brother, and as for the strange guest, she had almost forgotten him.

Towards evening she stole out of the parlor, and muffled in hood and shawl, went with Dinah to see her milk the cows. To be sure, the snow was half a foot deep, but what of that? a path was trodden down toward the barn, and cold would only give her red cheeks. When she found herself within the shed, where half a dozen cows were eating hay, she felt a little afraid, but, nevertheless, professed bravery, and laughingly told Dinah that she should like above all things to be a farmer's wife.

Dinah was heartily pleased at this, and vowed she would lose no time in telling master Archibald.

"And pray who is he?" asked Lydia.

"Lord bless your soul," answered the maid, "he is the very best one of the family, and you haven't hearn of him?"

"The best of what family?" asked Lydia.

"Why, old massa's, to be sure." And she milked so fast with the excitement of her subject, that the sound on the bottom of the tin pail almost prevented her words being understood.

"Ah, yes," said Lydia, "I heard Maria speak of him last night, I think."

"It's a wonder if you did," said Dinah, "for they never mention his name more than if he was of my color—case they're ashamed of him."

"She could not well avoid it," said Lydia; "I asked for whom she was making an apron that you, perhaps, saw her at work on, and she told me it was for her brother's child."

"He, he, he!" laughed Dinah; in fact, she could not milk for some minutes, so convulsed was she with laughter. At length she managed to say, "Massa Archibald have no child, more than the man in the moon!"

"I don't understand how it is," said Lydia; but Dinah said she did, that the apron was for master Williams's child, that he had several children, and lived in the village of Sumnerville, while master Archibald was a single young man and lived at home. "But you might be here a month and not see him," she added. It was natural enough that Lydia should ask why. "Case," answered Dinah, "they's ashamed of him; he isn't polished like the rest of the family; he likes to work on the farm, and don't wear gloves when he goes to meeting; and, besides all that, he has had the small pox the last year, and that spilt his beauty, and so they's more ashamed of him than ever; but," she continued, "there is no love lost, for he don't like the ladies any better than they does him."

"I should like to see him," Lydia said, "but won't he eat with us ever?"

"When the neighbor country-folks are here they ask him to come to tea sometimes; but when there are visitors like you, Miss, he, doesn't get asked, but I look out for his comfort in the kitchen," and Dinah seemed to felicitate herself on that.

"I wish I could see him," said Lydia again, thoughtfully.

"Bless your life, child," said Dinah eagerly, "just look down the lane; that is he with the gun and dogs."

Lydia looked as directed, but saw little more than the outline of the young man's figure, before she heard her name called, and looking up saw before her Mr. Timothy Sumner, who professed to have felt great alarm on her account, as, hastily drawing her arm within his, he conducted her back to the house, where she found the two young women in visible trepidation.

She had certainly been very indiscreet, so recklessly exposing herself to the rough weather, to say nothing of the alarm she had caused; and owning her fault like a good girl as she was, she sat down by the fire and resigned herself to a hopeless endurance for another evening.

After tea, whist was proposed, and as Lydia seemed to enter

into the spir't of the game, she kept thinking how much better she should like Archibald for a partner than Judith. On returning to her chamber she sat down by the fire to muse about the family in general, and Archibald in particular, but her attention was presently arrested by voices in the next room. The communicating door had been left ajar, and listening close, for she thought of the haunted chamber, she could hear imperfectly what was said, and was soon convinced that the inmates were human beings: one of them, from the full, firm tone of his voice, in all probability Archibald himself. He seemed, however, little more than a listener to his companion, whose cracked and tremulous accent betokened age and infirmity. He was evidently telling stories of his own wonderful adventures in hunts, and camps, and fights. Satisfied that her neighbors were not ghosts, she tried to busy herself with her own thoughts, and at last, in recalling all Dinah had said, and imagining realms of rural happiness, she fell asleep to the murmur of their voices, and did not wake till the light streamed through her window.

Two days went by, and Lydia neither saw nor heard anything of Archibald. She scarcely ventured to leave the parlor for a moment, least it should be thought at variance with her friends' ideas of propriety. She dared neither skip nor dance, nor in fact move at all, unless obvious occasion required. When the third day came, she could endure the restraint no longer; she had cut new patterns, and exhibited all her dresses, that the Sumners might remodel theirs according to the latest fashions; she had also told them of all the new styles of wearing the hair she had heard of; and she knew no other means by which to make herself useful or agreeable; and she felt that she had not come near their hearts: there was a constant restraint and formality in all their intercourse, which was alien to her nature.

They employed themselves most of their time in embroidery and fine needle-work, which seemed so completely to absorb their minds, that they could scarcely converse at all, and when they did so, it was with a cold, reserved melancholy, and with words that betrayed only the surface of feeling.

Mr. Sumner was consequential, but with persons whom he considered socially his equals, most genial and conversable. He however was obliged to deny himself the pleasure of the young women's society, in consequence of the heavy demands on his time, being one of those persons who seem always to have a great deal in hand, without ever doing much. It was his habit to say, almost every night in his life, "Judith, my dear, can't you oblige me by having breakfast a little earlier to-morrow than usual?" At which times Judith invariably said, "I will endeavor, sir, to do so," whereupon the old gentleman said, "Thank you, my dear"—and retired; and Judith, tinkling a little hand-bell, transmitted the order to Dinah, who never failed to laugh good humoredly on hearing the familiar words.

Every pleasant day, and sometimes when it was not so pleasant, Mr. Sumner went into the adjoining county; what he went for, no one ever knew or questioned, it was enough that he was going there.

Lydia was not without curiosity, and was ill satisfied with this indefinite definition of his purposes; and so, one evening, after the accustomed order for an early breakfast, and the announcement that he was going to the adjoining county, she went abruptly into the kitchen and inquired of Dinah, what on earth it was for which Mr. Sumner made this almost daily journey; but Dinah knew no more about it than the man in the moon, to use her favorite expression. She recollected, that twenty years or so before, he had owned some property there, but that had been sold in Mrs. Sumner's time, as she distinctly remembered that the man who bought the estate had brought and presented to Mrs. Sumner a pair of shoes, for obligingly and unhesitatingly signing the deed. This, she said, she could not forget, for the shoes were never worn, and Mr. Sumner took them from the chest, and put them in the sunshine regularly twice every week, in memory of his wife's amiability. Lydia had remarked, that one of the chief occupations of Mr. Sumner, when at home, was the reviewing and packing and unpacking of all articles that had belonged to his wife. On an upper piazza, fronting the room she had occupied, there were regularly displayed, dresses, faded ribbons, old caps, and bon-

nets, which had been stylish in their day, but which now looked so antique and odd, as to excite any one, not particularly interested, to laughter or to pity; at least Lydia was so tempted, as she stole a look at them one day. It was well no one saw her but Dinah, for she not only laughed, but said she would burn them in the fire without reservation, except, indeed, such little mementoes as might be kept in perfect preservation. No letter had Mrs. Sumner ever received from a fifth cousin, stating that her husband had bought six new shirts, or was taking the famous Indian Panacea for the chills, or from her mother giving advice about the teething of Judith, or Maria's hooping-cough, that was not carefully treasured, yellow and musty, and with the ink faded to a dull brown. In these articles, and the care they required, one of the heaviest demands on the time of Mr. Timothy Sumner was explained; and Lydia could not help hoping, that no chamber was worse haunted than that which held the chests, bureaus, and wardrobes, filled with these relics.

But to return to the kitchen where Lydia was talking with Dinah about the adjoining county, and proposing to go thither herself on an exploring expedition. She fancied that her prim behavior for two or three days had earned her the privilege of a little chat in the kitchen, but she was wrong. A light tap on the door with the thimble-finger of Judith (she wore a gold thimble), arrested her gaiety. Some trivial excuse, I forget what, that stately lady made for recalling her to the parlor. "In one moment," said Lydia, "I want to learn how to make these cakes, which Dinah is mixing."

She really wanted to ask Dinah whether she had communicated her message about being a farmer's wife, and to know of Cato, what he proposed doing with the three baskets of corn that he had brought in and ranged against the wall; but Dinah had only said she had a great long story to tell, and Cato, that Mr. Archibald and he were going to have a shelling match that night, when the tap of the thimble, a little louder than before, put an end to the scheme she had half formed about helping to shell the corn. Her countenance grew blank, but kindled up with a smile as Dinah whispered, "Never mind, Miss, I've got a plan;" and so, returning to the parlor, she renewed her in-

structions in reference to some stitch, which Judith had forgotten. Fortune favors the brave, thought she, and for a time interested herself in the stitching, cross stitching, and double stitching of the ladies; but as the time wore on, and Dinah failed to present herself, she began to wish she was at home. "It is useless to remain here longer," she thought, "I shall never see Archibald, and as for the rest of the family, I shall never make friends of them;" and lighting the lamp, she said she should return home in the morning, and retired to her chamber to gather her effects together, so as to be in readiness for the coach.

It must not be supposed, that Lydia was in love with Archibald; by no means; curiosity had induced an interest at first, which was deepened by a knowledge of his peculiar situation. Her heart was overflowing with kindness, and she fancied she might in some way be of service to him, for she imagined him an outcast from all the world, as well as from the love of his sisters. If she could only ask him to come to her mother's and get breakfast when he brought a load of hay to town, she would be so glad. "He is good enough to eat with me, I know," she said, "else Dinah would not have said he was good, for she is good;" and so, childishly musing, she refolded and placed in her satchel such little articles as were scattered about the table and chairs.

While she was thus engaged, Dinah presented herself, saying, they were all shelling corn in the kitchen, and having such nice times—wouldn't Miss Lydia just come down a little while?

"They will compel me away by some means," she thought, "it is of no use;" and complaining of a headache, she retired to rest in a petulant mood, thinking what a very ugly name Archibald is.

When Mr. Timothy Sumner came back, towards midnight, from one of his excursions into the adjoining county, and was informed of Lydia's proposed return to town in the morning, he was surprised and pained; it must not be so on any account; he was confident she had intended to stay longer, and they had surely failed in hospitality in some way, else she had seen such members of his family as were no credit to him. This supposition seemed to be favored by the knowledge of Lydia's hav-

ing once or twice gone into the kitchen, and once to the cow-yard. "Well, well, I will see to it in the morning," he said, and having taken a letter from his pocket and written with his pencil various unmeaning characters on the back of it, he retired to his chamber, muttering something about Archibald and uncle Jonathan, to the effect that they had better live in the woods—which were suited to them and the like. To say truth, Archibald was very careless, both of the etiquette which his father and sisters punctiliously observed, and of his personal appearance. No one took any interest in him, and, therefore, he took little in himself; but during the last few days a change had come o'er the spirit of his dream. He had told Dinah, for the first time in his life, that he wished her to iron his shirts a little more particularly; he had also more than once given his boots into Cato's hands to be blacked; he had called at the barber's, when at the tavern, and had his whiskers trimmed in a neat and fashionable style. All these were things he had never done before, nor could Dinah imagine, as she herself said, what possessed him. As he had not seen Lydia, and there was no probability of his seeing her, it would seem that she could have had nothing to do with the metamorphosis.

The snowbirds had scarcely hopped from the boughs in the morning, before Lydia was dressed and in complete readiness to depart. The parlor fire burned brightly, and seating herself before it, she awaited a little impatiently the breakfast.

A sudden thought struck her—she would go into the kitchen and talk with Dinah, who had been very obliging to her, and so quicken the speed of time. "Now truly I is sorry," said that amiable personage, "that you are to leave us, for no such quality as you has been in this house for many a day; but you must come back when it gets warm and we make the garden, and now you couldn't see master Archibald if you were to stay ever so long."

"And why so?" asked Lydia; "but," she added, "I suppose it's because he don't want to see me half so much as I do him."

"That he do, Miss," said Dinah, "and last night he was ready in his best coat to eat supper with you, when proud Miss

Judith came out with her ribbons all a flying, and told him he looked like a fright, and if she were him, she would hide away from all humanity—meaning by that,” said Dinah, “that he must hide away from you, and so master Archibald sat here sad all the evening, and would not eat any supper. But the reason you can’t see him now is, that old massa sent him away on government business this morning, and he must be in town by this time, ’case he went to Clovernook to take the first stage.”

“And so he is gone; well, he must be a singular sort of genius,” said Lydia, musingly.

Dinah answered that he was, and said farther, “They say he is like his uncle Jonathan, but I don’t think so.”

“And have you seen that curious uncle?” and Lydia was reminded of the stranger’s arrival, and the wild hunting stories she had heard one night; but before she had time to make further inquiry, Mr. Sumner presented himself, and rubbing his hands together in a brisk sort of way, began protesting against the possibility of Lydia’s departure; no, no, he could not hear of it; he had planned half a dozen little excursions, which he could not be disappointed of; not, certainly, unless she could give good reasons for her return to the city.

Thus forced to make some plea, Lydia adopted the first that presented itself, and said that her wardrobe had not been sufficiently provided to warrant a longer stay, but that she should be happy to avail herself of his hospitality another time. “Then return to-night,” urged Mr. Sumner; this suggestion was seconded on the appearance of the young ladies, and, more to avoid importunity than for any intention of complying, Lydia acceded to the request. She could not help remarking, that no one seemed anxious to withdraw her from the kitchen; and not only so, but they assured her she should have the whole range of the house, and barn, too, if it pleased her.

Having settled that she should return, the little family sat down to muffins and coffee; after which, Mr. Sumner, being called from home by some urgent business, was obliged immediately to make his adieus; not, however, without reiterat-

ing his expectation of meeting Lydia again in the evening, and receiving her assurance that he should not be disappointed.

After his departure there was not long to wait till the ticking of the clock was drowned in the heavy rumble of the coach, and Cato, who had been stationed at the gate, presented himself, and taking charge of her luggage, hastened out to hold up one hand in token of a passenger. The four horses were brought to a sudden stand—the luggage stowed on the top, and the lady inside; adieus waved to the ladies at the window, to Dinah, who stood midway from the gate to the house, and to Cato, who leaned over the fence, laughing his good will, and by way of performing some parting feat for the especial benefit of Miss Lydia, dislodging a cat, with one horizontal sweep of the hand, from her comfortable position on the gate-post.

“It may be a long time before I see that old place again,” thought Lydia, and she looked earnestly till it was hidden from her view by a turn in the road and a clump of trees.

“The farm you view so intently,” said a full manly voice at her side, “presents a much better appearance in the summer time,” and turning round, her eyes half blinded with sunlight, Lydia saw that her travelling company was only one gentleman, of strikingly prepossessing appearance, and she fancied she must somewhere have seen him before, or a person who looked very much like him. His ungloved hands unmistakably spoke him a farmer, and supposing he might live in that neighborhood, she said, “You seem familiar with the scenery,” to which the stranger replied simply, “Yes,” and leaning from the window, added, “Ah, you see the place to great disadvantage: when yonder line of forest is in full leaf, and this orchard in blossoms, instead of snow, it presents a sight far more pleasing.”

“Do you know the proprietor?” asked Lydia; and her fellow passenger said that he had some sort of acquaintance with him, adding, “You also have, as I judge.”

After some further conversation of Mr. Timothy Sumner, during which the stranger, laughingly, asked whether she had remarked his going into the adjoining county, he said abruptly, “A peculiar family!”

“Do you know the young man?” Lydia inquired; “and is he peculiar, too?”

“Well, perhaps he is,” said the stranger, “but I don’t so much dislike his peculiarities.”

“I fancy *I* should not,” she said; “indeed, my sympathies were quite drawn out in his behalf.”

“And did you not see him?” and her questioner smiled as he spoke.

She replied that she did not, repeating some things which Dinah had told her, and concluded by saying she should like vastly to see him, but inasmuch as he had been sent from home that morning, and had not mingled with the rest of the family at all during her visit, which indeed as like as not would never be repeated, she doubted exceedingly whether she should ever form Mr. Achibald’s acquaintance. The travellers found each other extremely interesting; the fast flying coach seemed to give impulse to their tongues, and they conversed so familiarly and freely as to feel astonished at themselves when their little journey was ended.

“And so,” said the young man at parting, “you have some curiosity to see this Archibald Sumner? I myself saw him this morning, and he told me he should return home in this coach to-night; you have an invitation to go back, at your option: I will reserve a seat for you with pleasure;” and before Lydia had time to accept or decline the civility, he had said “Good morning,” and was off.

At the door stood Mrs. Heath, waiting to make some inquiries as to her daughter’s unexpected return, which presently slid into inquiries about Mr. Timothy Sumner; “And who,” she asked, “was that bumpkin who assisted you to alight?”

The color rose to Lydia’s cheek as she answered that she didn’t know the gentleman; she hardly knew why, but she unwillingly heard him characterized in this manner, was half angry with her mother, and resolved at once to return to Mr. Sumner’s in the afternoon.

“Archibald will not know,” she said to herself, “that I am informed he is going; nor do I go for that reason; in fact I don’t much expect he will return; Dinah said he would be

gone a week; but I promised Mr. Sumner to come back, and I don't know what arrangements he may have made to-day: I must not disappoint him." And selecting from her wardrobe more carefully than before, and arranging her curls with peculiar care, she awaited the coach.

In due time it presented itself, eight inside—just room for one more. The acquaintance of the morning was there, and had reserved beside himself a seat for Lydia: she looked at the different passengers, and could see no one who answered her ideas of Archibald; and, ashamed of the interest she had expressed in the morning, she would not so much as allude to him in any way, and was now quite as much over-reserved as she had been over-familiar in the morning. The stranger was certainly both handsome and agreeable, but her manner abated not from its formality. This for no fault of his; she was angry with herself for having talked with him so freely; for having gone home, and then for having started back again. If Archibald were in the coach she didn't blame his sisters for being ashamed of him; and when it stopped at Mr. Sumner's door, she looked curiously to see which was he. The stranger seemed to notice it, for as he handed her out he smiled: Archibald was not there. The third day after her arrival the ladies were invited to a dinner party in Clovernook, but Lydia with the thawing of the snow had caught cold, and did not feel like going, and being by this time sufficiently at home, was permitted to remain for half a day alone, Mr. Sumner accompanying his daughters.

When she grew tired of reading, she went into the kitchen and assisted Dinah about making pies.

"Just tend the baking, Miss," said Dinah, "while I go to the barn and ask Cato to get me three eggs;" but Lydia skipt away herself for the eggs. The door was wide open, the snow melting from the roof and falling in great cold masses along the sill, and the floor covered with yellow sheaves for threshing. Cato was not there, and hearing some one on the scaffold above, she called out, "Is that you?" And hearing a responsive "Yes," she added "Come down here; you are the very man I want."

"At your service, Miss," said a voice which seemed not unfamiliar, and in the person who had slid down by the rope, and was dropping on one knee at her feet, Lydia recognised the gentleman with whom she had travelled in the coach.

A year after that little incident, as the snow was one night drifting against the windows of one of the prettiest cottages in the whole neighborhood of Clovernook, two persons sat before the fire talking, and seeming by their unromantic ease to be husband and wife. "Poor old man!" said the woman, at the conclusion of some story to which she had been listening; "and so he gave you this nice farm and pretty cottage, and then went back to the wilderness to die alone?"

"It was no sacrifice," answered the young man, "he was captured by the savages when so young, and has learned to love their rude life so well, that civilization has no charms for him; certainly it had none when it involved the pride that despised him; and besides, Jonathan's Hill will perpetuate his memory when we are forgotten."

"I did not think you selfish before," said his partner, the tears coming to her eyes, and then, as if ashamed of what she had uttered, she added, quickly, "And he knew nothing of the phantom gun and ghost?"

"And you, too, misunderstand me," said the young man half-reproachfully; "I urged him to share our home, but he would not, and as I said before, he made no sacrifice, or less than he would, had he remained." She dropt her head till her curls quite concealed her blushes, and a smile, playfully malicious, came over the handsome features of the young man, as he added, "Well, well, if I am selfish, I am the very man you wanted, for you told me so; else, perhaps, Lydia Heath might never have been the wife of Archibald Sumner."

The wife shook back her curls and smiled, as the kiss of reconciliation was pressed on her forehead, saying, "What a pretty name Arch. is; and if I did tell you you were the man I wanted, blindly though it were, time has proven that I was not mistaken."

THE CLAVERELS.

THE July sun was oppressively hot—no breath of air stirred the dusty leaves, and the clouds, light and fleecy, gave no indication of rain. There were no bird songs to cheer the hay-makers; and as I am not writing poetry, I don't feel at liberty to say there were, though I would fain give the persons of whom I write all the pleasant accessories that come within the limits of rural probability. The eldest of these persons was Mr. Claverel, a thin, pale man, of about five-and-forty; the other three were his sons, two of them stout young men of nineteen and twenty-one, the other, two or three years older, and of much thinner and slighter proportions. The younger two, David and Oliver, were moving slowly, half-bent over the thick green swaths which they cut as they proceeded, and Mr. Claverel followed a little behind, pitching and tossing the ridges of grass to facilitate its drying. His long, sandy hair, parted in front, and combed back either way, was wet with perspiration, and hung down his neck in half-curved slips; and, though the heat twinkled and glimmered all about him, he wore beneath his outer shirt an under one of red flannel always, an indispensable article of his apparel. His vest and trowsers were of some dark woollen material; and thick, heavy boots, and a broad-rimmed black fur hat—for he wore no coat—completed his costume. The sun was some two or three hours on the western slope, and they had been at work hard, and in silence, since noon, when Mr. Claverel, looking up, perceived that one of the mowers was missing, and throwing down his rake, and taking from his hat a handkerchief of red silk, dotted with little white

spots, he wiped his face and hands, and climbing on a winrow of hay, looked eagerly about the field, which was cut diagonally by a deep hollow, so that a considerable portion was still out of view. His bright-blue eyes sparkled anger as he failed to discover the object of his search, for he was a man of quick passions; and he called angrily, first to one and then to the other of the sons at work, to make inquiry about the one who was missed.

“He says his scythe is so dull he can’t work,” said David, sheltering his eyes and looking at his father, who replied—“I guess most likely he is so dull himself he can’t work. Tell him to make his scythe sharp, if it’s dull. Does he expect it will sharpen itself?”

“I don’t know, sir,” said David; “I know mine don’t,” and bending down, he resumed his task.

Mr. Claverel paused a moment, perplexed, and then adjusting his handkerchief within his hat, so that one corner was visible over the left eye, he set off in the direction of a stunted walnut that grew at a short distance, in the hollow. The slope was no sooner gained than he perceived, stretched at full length in the shadow, and surrounded by the tall grass, the truant son. His head was raised on one hand, and in the other he held a stick, with which he was coiling and uncoiling a black snake, which he seemed recently to have killed.

“Is that you, Richard?” said the father, in a tone indicative of no very pleasant humor.

“Yes, sir,” said the idler, partly rising, for he stood in fear of his father, and then, ashamed of having betrayed such a feeling, sank back, and resumed his sport, when Mr. Claverel continued, “Is this the way you expect to earn your bread? why, you don’t earn your salt!” Richard made no reply, and his father, coming a little nearer, said, “Why are you not at work?”

‘He that would thrive must rise at five,
He that has thriven may lie till seven;’

for he had always some wise saw of this sort at his command. Richard answered, that he was not well; to which Mr. Claverel

merely echoed, incredulously, "Not well!" and then added, "If you are really sick, *sir*, (this was a style Mr. Claverel always used when speaking to a child with whom he was displeased), go to the house and bring a coffee-pot of cold water to the field. Do you think, *sir*, you have strength enough to do that?"

Richard said nothing, but slowly rising, proceeded to obey his orders. A little ashamed of the deceit he had practised, he walked very slowly, as though it was with difficulty he could walk at all. He saw his two brothers bravely fronting the sun, and looked very intently in an opposite direction, for some pangs of conscience disturbed him; then as he walked on he tried to excuse himself by saying his scythe was too dull to admit of his mowing, and that he was not well at any rate. He was not, however, self-deceived, and he secretly resolved that when he should have taken the water to the field, he would resume mowing, and work heartily till night.

He was constitutionally unfitted to labor, and really believed himself possessed of talents, which the most unfortunate combination of circumstances continually crushed. In fact, he had intellectual gifts, in some sort, enough to render him dissatisfied with the position of a mere laborer, but not enough to lift him out of that position.

He read, in a very careless manner, such books as came in his way, rarely appreciatively, for he had not strength and grasp of mind sufficient to get thoroughly at the truth of things. He had no one to encourage or sympathize with him in the least, no one to give to his mind the bent it was capable of. True, his mother concealed his faults as much as possible, and magnified his little ailments, of which he affected to have a great many, thus screening him from the work he so much despised, and was constantly endeavoring to avoid. Nevertheless, he was sometimes goaded by his conscience, sometimes by his father's anger, into reluctant effort at a task, on which occasions he never failed to curse the evil star that made him a clown and a drudge. Mr. Claverel was an active, intelligent, pains-taking farmer; his two younger sons, a little dull, and plodding, though contented and industrious; but Richard, he often said, was the millstone suspended about his neck. On the day I write of he

had, as I said, resolved to go back and mow till night, though it should kill him, as he said to himself; not that there were any reasonable grounds for such an unhappy fear; his appetite was uniformly good; his sleep sound; and there was nothing to justify such ill-boding. Nevertheless, the feeling was genuine, and whenever there was no possibility of escape, he fell back on that noble resolution, and said, though it killed him, he would do it.

The old oaken bucket came up from the well dripping with cool water, and the bright tin-pot was filled to overflowing. He hesitated—he did not know precisely why—the heat twinkled over the dusty stubbles in a forbidding way—the low, spreading apple tree dropped its cool shadows on the stone pavement by the door very pleasantly—a little way off, beneath a shed of clapboards, his mother was baking currant pies and ginger cakes—the strings of her cap were untied, and the towel she wore as an apron, covered with flour—she looked very warm and tired, but patient still; and when she saw Richard standing by the well with his pot of water poised on the curb, she smiled, and, coming towards him, inquired if he were sick again.

“Not much,” said he, smiling graciously, as if it were through much pain, for he meant that his mother should understand that he was sick, in spite of his assertion.

“Poor boy,” she said, putting her hands on his forehead, “you have some fever; you must sit here in the shade, for you don’t look a bit well, and are not able to go to the field.”

“But I must take this water,” suggested Richard, “for father is angry because I stopped work; and if I don’t go back again, he’ll tear the house down, for aught I know.”

However, he sat down on the chair which his mother provided, half believing, since she had said so, that he was not very well. A small bottle of camphor, Mrs. Claverel’s infallible remedy for all disease, whether fevers or wounds, burns or rheumatisms, was speedily brought, and, having inhaled some of its odor, the sick youth professed himself better; on which the kind-hearted and mistaken woman brought forth one of the fresh-baked pies, the delicious fragrance of which tempted him

to try to eat ; making which attempt she left him, and herself carried the water to the field.

“ Oh, Dolly, what brought you here ? ” exclaimed Mr. Claverel, throwing down his rake and hurrying toward his wife, who was sweating under her burden.

Explanations followed, but the story of Richard's being sick failed to touch the heart of Mr. Claverel ; and for the first time in his life he called his wife a foolish woman ; and in a tone that had in it less of tenderness than harshness, though he really felt kindly, told her to go back to the house, and never come into the harvest field again through such sunshine. Mrs. Claverel put a pie she had brought, and her coffee-pot, into the hands of her husband without saying a word—she was not angry, but “ her feelings were hurt. ” She had been all day busily at work ; and as she went forth, tired and worn, promised herself an over-recompense, in a consciousness of happiness conferred ; she was disappointed ; and as she turned away, more than one tear moistened the olive cheek that had long since, in the struggle and turmoil of life, lost all its roses. She saw not the flock of twenty lambs that started up before her from the fence corners, and, with horns curling over their ears ran, closely huddled together, down the dusty lane ; nor yet, a little further on, the beautiful doves, milk white and soft brown, and with gold and purple flashing from their wings and bosoms, plump and round, that with nodding crests walked a little way before her, and then, as her step came too near, with a sudden whirr and rustle, flew to the accustomed shed, and settled themselves in a long, silent row. At the spring, near the old bridge, two cows were drinking : another time they would have made a gentle and comfort-speaking picture ; now they were meaningless ; and passing on, over a little hill, and through a gate, and past the tall, slender pear tree, from the cone-like top of which the bright, shining feathers of a peacock were trailing down the sunshine, she reached the porch, and sat down in the shadow of the apple tree. Home was no refuge and no shelter from sorrow ; a place to toil and suffer in—that was all it seemed just then.

Richard, with the camphor bottle in one hand, and a large

volume in the other, sat with his chair thrust back on two feet, and his head leaned against the wall, reading and yawning alternately. An old brown hen, with ruffled feathers, and a strip of red flannel tied to her tail, (a device adopted by housewives sometimes to break up untimely "settings,") was picking the crumbs from the dish which had held the pie. The young man did not offer his mother the chair on which he sat, though no other was near, nor notice her in any way, until she asked him if he felt better; on which he muttered, half-inaudibly, that he didn't know as he did. This was the truth, inasmuch as he had not been ill at all, and he took some credit to himself for having said so.

"What are you reading?" said Mrs. Claverel presently.

Richard made no reply, except by turning the back of the volume toward her, thus presenting the device of a wind-mill, in bright gilt, knowing very well that it would convey no idea to her mind, or at least not the correct one. She made no further inquiry, however, feeling that it was some lesson of wisdom altogether beyond her apprehension, but arose, and went about her household cares.

Meantime the two younger sons sat on the shady side of a hay-stack, eating the currant pie, and drinking from the pot of cold water, while Mr. Claverel continued vigorously pitching the hay into long green ridges—he didn't want anything to eat.

By little and little the heat diminished, till at last the sun rested in the topmost limb of a huge oak that threw its shadow far across the hay-field. Mrs. Claverel was laying her cloth for supper under the low porch, when Richard, putting down his book with an expression of contempt, said he could write a better one himself.

Mrs. Claverel smiled, and said, "I'll dare say! but what is your book, son?"

Richard put his finger on the wind-mill again, saying, "I showed you once," and left the house, muttering something to himself about the simple set he lived with. His father, he knew, would shortly be at home, and he must either pretend to have recovered and go to work, or affect to be sick and go to bed—else put himself out of reach of the storm which sooner or

later was sure to come after such premonitions as he had already received.

Mounted on a little bay horse which he called Buckephalus, (Bucephalus,) and the rest of the family Richard's horse, he soon appeared before the door, and, suffering his mother to draw a bucket of water for the pawing charger on which he sat, said, with an air of mingled impudence and importance, "If the old man wants to know where I am, tell him I am gone to Jerusalem."

To say "father," made him appear boyish, and as though under restraint, he fancied—hence the adoption of that elegant title, "the old man." This, though shocking to the feelings of his mother, she did not reprove, partly from the blind love she bore her son, and partly from her dread of domestic eruptions. And up to this time, Mr. Claverel had been kept in ignorance of half the ill-temper and ill-behavior of his eldest son.

The cloud of dust had scarcely disappeared behind the fleet hoofs of "Buckephalus," when Mr. Claverel, in a mood half-petulant and half-sorrowful, entered his domicile, first, however, having made his toilette for supper, a process consisting simply of washing his face and hands in a large tub of water which was standing by the well—a sort of family basin—putting down the muslin sleeves over the red ones, which, during the hours of labor, were always rolled back to the elbow, buttoning his vest, and combing his hair: an example regularly imitated by the younger sons. Richard thought all out-of-doors too large a dressing-room, and made his personal renovations within his own chamber.

Mrs. Claverel dispensed the fragrant tea in silence, and without once lifting her eyes; but it was useless, the inward sorrow had worked itself to the surface. Mr. Claverel, who understood it all, made some unusual manifestations of tenderness.

"There, Dolly," said he, offering her the easy chair, which was always at "his place," but she shook her head; whereupon the troubled husband reached for the wand of feathers with which she sedulously brushed away the flies, without giving herself time to partake of the nice supper she had spread. But Mrs. Claverel had the headache, and "didn't want a mouthful."

"She had too much to do," Mr. Claverel said; and as soon as he was through the hurry of harvest, he would set about finding a "girl." Mrs. Claverel bent her head lower and lower, as if sipping her tea, but the kind manner and words of her husband quite overcame her; and abruptly leaving the table, she retired to her own chamber, where, after some natural tears, thinking, it must be owned, a little hardly of her husband, she began to blame circumstances, and finally only blamed herself, like the simple-minded, kind-hearted woman she was. Having opened the shutters and drawn the arm-chair to the table, on which lay the newspaper and the Bible, she trimmed the lamp, and with some further arrangements, especially with reference to the comfort of her husband, she descended, with the most amiable manner imaginable. Mr. Claverel was groping about in the thickening twilight, for he could not find the lamp, in awkward attempts to get the tea things out of the way.

"Is that you, Dolly?" he said, surprised to see her, especially in so genial a mood, for she was actually humming—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies," &c.

"Yes, Samuel, it is me," she said, pausing in the middle of the stanza, and removing the tea-pot from the table to the cupboard, while Mr. Claverel, his dejected countenance suddenly illumined, performed a like office with the sugar-bowl, joining in—

"I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

When the hymn was concluded, they talked of the warm weather, of the harvest, and of the neighbors, both carefully avoiding the subject uppermost in their thoughts.

At last Mr. Claverel said, "I wish I had apprenticed Richard to the blacksmith's trade, long ago—'fast bind, fast find,' you know, Dolly; where is the boy?"

Mrs. Claverel didn't say he had gone to Jerusalem, but that she guessed likely he was gone to get some new shoes set on his horse.

"He is a bad boy, Dolly," said the father.

"Not so bad, but unfortunate," said the mother; "it seems as if he has bad luck in everything he undertakes. Poor boy, he is not able to work, but he has such a love of books; hadn't we better send him to college, Sammy?"

The suggestion gave rise to a considerable discussion; for Mr. Claverel could not see it in precisely the same light in which his wife saw it. "Richard," he said, "did not like delving in the sile much, and he feared he would not work in the mental field much better."

"But," urged the mother, "if he can't do one thing, perhaps he can another. I am sure we ought to give him a chance." Here she took from the bureau two new red flannel shirts, saying, as she laid them in the lap of her husband, "Did you ever see such a pretty red? But don't you think, Sammy, we ought to do as I said about Richard?"

Mr. Claverel set great store by flannel shirts—especially red flannel ones. He felt of the soft texture, held the garments up admiringly, and said, "If the virtoo of red flannel was known, there would be no need of rheumatis; 'an ounce of preventive is worth a pound of cure,' Dolly."

"But what do you think about Richard?" said Mrs. Claverel. "You know better than I do. Beautiful shirts, beautiful!"

THE STUDENT.

SOME eight or ten days after this conversation, Richard Claverel, dressed as beseemed a gentleman student, was on his way to the seminary in which he was to be fitted for college. On one arm he carried a satchel of books, and across his saddle was a pair of well filled bags, in which his mother had put as many new fine shirts and carefully darned stockings as he would be likely to need during the term, though it was proposed that he should come home on a visit in a month, as Elmwood, the place of his destination, was but ten miles away. He seemed little to favor this proposal, it is true; and when his mother tearfully entreated that he would not fail to come, he said he would if he couldn't stay away; that he was not certain he should come home at all; at least, not till he had finished the preliminary course, but that she and the old man could come up to Elmwood and see him, commencement times. When, however, he was fairly off, his heart misgave him; he looked back and saw his father leaning over the gate, watching him, and remembered his last words, "Only the fool hates the school;" he saw his mother standing under the low porch, just as he had left her; his young sisters, Martha and Jane, were shouting, as they played at "hide and seek"—it mattered little to them that Dick was leaving home—he had never helped them build a play-house, but always killed their pet kittens, and called themselves little simpletons, because they preferred dish-washing to grammar—so, on the whole, they were rather glad to be rid of him.

Slowly wending down the lane, with axes over their shoulders, and without once regretting his absence, were David and

Oliver. Richard had lightened their labors but little, and it was scarce a cause for tears that he was gone. Looking back, he saw all this, and half wished he had staid at home, and borne his part manfully and cheerfully; very glad would he have been of any plausible pretext for returning; but there was none—he had shaped his course with his own hands, and the fixed fact closed about him, and left him no chance of escape. Though twenty-three, he had never been from home at all, save for a day or two, with his mother, to visit relations, and a desolate, home-sick feeling came over him, as the road struck into a dense thick beech wood, flat and low, quite shutting the red brick homestead from his view. He reined in his horse, dismounted, and, sitting down on a mossy log, mused long, sometimes so earnestly and coherently, that it might be said, he thought.

“The little girls are playing; I suppose they are glad I am gone; and David and Oliver have by this time felled a tree; I wonder what one—perhaps the hollow sycamore that grew by the spring—perhaps the hickory with the shelving bark, where I caught the squirrel for which Jane cried, and I would not give it her—or the beech, that grew in the cornfield—likeliest they have felled that for back-logs; let me see, they are just three feet and a half in length. And father, what is he doing? (he didn't think of him as the old man,) reading the Bible, I guess, to mother, who is making bread in the shade of the apple-tree. Dear good woman! I wish I had told her I would come in a month! I wish, when she asked me what I was reading, I had said Don Quixote, and not showed her the windmill.”

A sudden fancy struck him; perhaps some book, or some article of clothing, quite necessary, had been forgotten. He overhauled his luggage eagerly, as one looks for a newly-missed treasure, but all in vain; nothing had been forgotten; so with reluctance, and as one cast out of the home where all his hopes and affections centred, he re-arranged his effects, feeling that they were poor and scanty; and then, taking from his pocket a small purse, he emptied its contents, a few coins, into his hand, counted them over, and replaced them, with a sigh. “This is a dark, thick wood,” he said, “I might remain here forever—

what am I to anybody? What am I to the world? even at home they don't care for me." He paused a moment, and added, "well, why should they? I never did anything to make them love me. I have been an idler and a burden from the first; but it was my fortune; I could not help it; if I could, I would have done better; it is a mere lie that we make circumstances; circumstances make us. It is no merit of mine that I am not a thief or a murderer; if I had the training and the temptation which others have had that are so, I might have been no better. How do I know what I should have been under different circumstances? If I had been bound to a hard master, as my father was, and made to drive oxen, and burn logs, and dig ditches, all day, without ever reading a book, or seeing any persons of sense or refinement, I might have married Dolly Tompkins—did as he did—likely I should. And if I had, would I have done any worse than I am doing? No! a great deal better. I can see readily enough how others might have done, and for myself I am always going to do something, but the time never comes when I begin. I have professed to begin now, why do I not? There will never be a better time: weakness and indecision, we must part." He arose, after this contradictory and crooked soliloquy, as one determined to make his actions meet his convictions of duty, mounted his little bay, and rode briskly forward.

I have often thought since, if he had been blest with the counsel and encouragement of some kind and clear-sighted friend, who, seeing through the frailties and foibles of his character, could have discerned the higher and better qualities beneath, his natural wilfulness and waywardness might have been checked, and his weakness built into strength. I was too young to know it then, had too little appreciation, too little forbearance, too false and foolish an estimate of myself, and it is too late now. Often when I think of him—for I knew him well, and in the elm shadows that sweep against the house where I was born we have sat on many a summer afternoon when we were children: that is a long time ago, for my feet have pressed the summit whenceforward the way is down—down, where in darkness moans ever and ever the river of Death; when I think of him,

as I said, I incline to his own soft interpretation, and almost believe he was really ill-starred.

Under the sorrow and the struggle, the weakness and the rubbish of years, I go down daily where the airs are gentlest, the fountains brightest, and the birds are singing most sweetly, and laying back the shroud-folds, souls long entered on new spheres reanimate again pale dust, and my dearest playmates come back to me, crowned with beautiful innocence, just as they went away. It is here I like best to meet with Richard, with his golden curls blowing against my face, to turn over the picture books—Cock Robin, and another one, the name of which I forget, but larger and of a more serious character, telling about Saul, and Samuel, and David, and Goliath, and how

“The lowing kine unguided went
By the directest road,
When the Philistines homeward sent
The ark of Israel's God.”

Our library was not very large, but to us it was “ever charming, ever new,” and we didn't know that any other children had more than we, and so were satisfied.

But let me not linger: as the waves close over the drowning man, and the stream ripples on in the sunshine as before, time closes, to-day, over the places we occupied yesterday. Even in the home circle, after a short absence—we come back and find it narrowed, or another in our place, and no room for us any more.

The harvest was done, and the cattle were turned into the newly-shaven meadows—how they ran hither and thither, crowding from the tufts of fresh white clover their weaker fellows and, though full to repletion, feeding still. The corn was not yet ripe, and for man and beast there was a holyday. Mr. Claverel was come home from town, and sat in the porch, reading the newspaper. He was tired, but good-humored; tired, because he had ridden the black mare instead of driving her in the carriage: she was as good a creature, he said, as there was in the world, if she only had Tom on the near side to draw the load; so, in consideration of her “balky” propensities, he

generally used the saddle, unless Tom occupied the aforesaid position. He was good-humored because everything had gone on smoothly since the departure of Richard. Martha and Jane stood at the kitchen table, busy with the contents of the market basket; there were great brown paper packages of sugar and coffee; one smaller one in a thin, white paper, probably tea, from the exclamation, "Oh, isn't it good!" made as they inhaled its fragrance; then there were numberless little square packages in blue papers, labelled, "Fine Ground Ginger," "Best Allspice," &c. These they seized eagerly, and demanded guesses, each of the other, as to what they held; and whether a guess were right or wrong the laugh that followed was equally hearty.

David and Oliver were cutting wood, at the door, merely for pastime, for they had been chopping sturdily all day in the forest, and this was but playing with time until tea should be ready, to which, owing to health and exercise, they were always prepared to do honor; while Mrs. Claverel, that ever-busy housewife, was at her evening cares. The snowy cloth was already spread, garnished with sundry temptations—golden butter, and delicious bread, and ripe blackberries, and the pitcher of cream, like floating silver mixed with liquid gold. No place was arranged for Richard, and Martha and Jane had been promoted to the occupancy of his deserted chamber, and all the articles he left at home had been carefully packed away by the provident and loving hands of her whose mantle of charity was wide enough to cover all the faults of her child.

There was a growl from the sleepy watch-dog as the gate creaked on its hinges, followed by a rushing forth and a defiant barking; suddenly he paused, and, crouching in the pathway, began to whine his welcome; the girls left their basket, and ran to the door; David and Oliver put down their axes; and Mr. Claverel, taking off his spectacles, wiped his bright blue eyes, and looked around the corner of the porch.

"Oh! dear, he's done great things," exclaimed both the girls at once.

"He has finished his education, I expect," said Oliver, and the two boys resumed their chopping.

“Dolly,” called Mr. Claverel, looking toward the kitchen, “Mercy on us, Dolly, Richard has come home.”

“Is it possible?” said Mrs. Claverel; “poor boy, he must be sick; why, it is only two weeks since he went away.” But whether sick or well, Richard was sure of a welcome from her. Martha and Jane eyed him curiously, affecting the laughter with which they seemed to be convulsed, as though in fact he had made himself so ludicrous that laughter was unavoidable. Mr. Claverel resumed his paper with an uneasy gesture and a frowning brow, as though the arrival were unexpected and unwelcome. Mrs. Claverel alone went forth, half hesitatingly, half cordially, to meet him. As if he did not see her, he dropped his eyes to the ground and led his *Bucephalus* (he had learned to pronounce the name) back to the stables, with his father and sisters on one side, and his brothers on the other, but without noticing them, or receiving any notice. Supper was delayed some time for his coming, but he did not present himself, and Martha was sent forth to bid him come—presently returning with the intelligence that she could not find him; upon which, Mr. Claverel drew up his chair to the table, saying, “Come boys, come girls,” in a tone that indicated little concern about Richard, and Mrs. Claverel was reluctantly forced to pour the tea.

The supper, though unusually good, was not relished well by anybody, and was partaken of in silence. When it was finished, and Mr. Claverel had taken a kettle of warmed milk to feed the weaning calves, and gone out of the house, Mrs. Claverel put the teapot close to the fire, and sent Jane and Martha together, with an earnest injunction to look carefully all about, and see if they could not find Richard, and tell him to come in at once, while his father was gone out. On a heap of straw that lay on the barn floor they found him stretched at length; but he refused to go in, saying he was sick; and it was not until after nightfall, and when he was assured that the family were retired to rest, that his mother herself could persuade him to do so.

He was ashamed and mortified at his conduct, and as usual sought to palliate it in some measure with the old story: he had had bad luck! The teachers were all blockheads, and

as for his boarding-house, he would rather live in a smoke-house and cook for himself; he didn't think his bed had ever seen clean sheets, and the pillow was so small that it actually made his head ache to sleep on it—so much so, that he was utterly incapable of study; besides, the students were a set of fools that thought they knew every thing, whereas they scarcely knew *beans*. In view of all this, and much more not worth repeating, he had resolved to prosecute his studies at home; he didn't see why he could not learn just as well there as anywhere, and his mother didn't see either; so it was resolved that his room should be fitted up as a study, and that, without going from home, he should devote himself entirely to books. Martha and Jane, delighted as they were with their new quarters, having the secret promise of new dolls, were induced to give him peaceable possession; Mrs. Claverel mediating as she best could between the unstable, home-sick baby and his indignant father and brothers.

"You know, Sammy," she said, "Richard has always been used to a good home and a kind father, who made the most bountiful provision for him." Mrs. Claverel had tact. Mr. Claverel *was* a little flattered. He had, he said, "tried to provide for his own household."

"Yes, and you *have* provided—nobody can say to the contrary of that," was the timely reply; "and I guess Richard has found it out now, and will hereafter better appreciate his blessings."

Mr. Claverel said he hoped so. This was quite encouraging; and, secure of a little vantage-ground—but in justice to her, I must say, with no intention of deceiving, but only desirous of making all smooth—she went on to say, "I expect it would be a little hard for any of us to go from home, among strangers, where everything was new and different from what we had been used to, and stay contentedly. I am sure I should not want to live as Richard said he had to—poor boy!"

So, by dint of Mrs. Claverel's management, and Richard's pretty sedulous application for a few days, the new arrangement went forward, as a matter of course, with only the occasional jar of Mr. Claverel calling Richard "the sick student;"

and of Martha and Jane twitting him, whenever he displeased them, with, "Eh, you got home sick, and had to come back to mother!"

At the end of two weeks, however, he began to grow weary, and to think his room a very small and lonesome place. That was not the way to learn, he thought, with no teacher, and no one to encourage him. He wanted some sympathy, and his mother's bread and butter, excellent as they were, began to be taken as matters of course. He ceased to try to make himself agreeable to persons he considered so much beneath him; he became moody, and silent, and selfish. To see people about him happy and contented, only aggravated his restless and wretched state of mind. Hour after hour he sat alone in his chamber with a closed volume in his hand, and gazing on the vacant walls or floor. He wished to be a gentleman, without knowing how—to be a great man, without energy to employ the means by which greatness is attained. Sometimes he fancied there was no niche in creation suited to him, that effort was useless; and sometimes he indulged in vague dreams of uncertain advantages; some unforeseen and wonderful event would suddenly lift him into a great position. He never walked without keeping his eyes steadily fixed on the ground, lest he should miss the treasure that he expected; every rap startled him; he thought perhaps they were come to place a crown on his brows! Alas, they never did.

One afternoon, taking a book under his arm, he drew his hat over his eyes and went out without any definite purpose, and after wandering listlessly from place to place for a while, he stretched himself on the grass, in the shadow of an elm that grew by the road-side, and watched the passers by—now a pedlar bending under a huge pack, and now a teamster whistling by the side of his heavily-laden wagon.

"How are you, Mr. Claverel!" said a good humored, merry voice; and looking up, Richard saw before him the rosy face of the village doctor, to whom, raising his head on his hand, but without rising, he made some sort of despondent reply.

"If you had," said the medical man, "one half of my duties to attend to, you would have no time for sighing; at least over

imaginary woes. Just think of the real misery I am called on to witness in the course of my professional duty—sickness, sorrow, pain, death—death, pain, sickness, sorrow!”

“To die,” said Richard, “is the best thing belonging to life I think I should like your profession.”

“Get in,” said Dr. Hilton, making room beside himself in the nice little buggy he drove, “I will take you to-day on trial. I have a round that I think will be interesting to you. In the first place, I go to see a boy who has a broken leg, which will probably have to be amputated; then to see a young man who is becoming perfectly unmanageable—why, sir, he yesterday attempted the life of his little sister, Drusilla, and I have no doubt he will have to be sent to the insane asylum to-day. Let me see: my next visit is to the widow Paxton—she that was burnt out in the spring, at which time she so exerted herself, to save some part of her furniture, as to produce effects from which she will never recover—six helpless orphans to leave to the mercy of the world, sir! Come, get in, get in.”

And rising to his feet, and drawing down his vest, and up his collar, Richard did get in; but looking wistfully at the sharp, red gables of the farm-house, which being seen by Dr. Hilton, he slapped him over the shoulder, and said, “Ah, that will not do, Dr. Claverel,” and, laughing, they drove away together.

THE SHEEP AND THE DOGS.

"WHAT *do* you think has become of Richard?" said Mrs. Claverel to her husband, the third morning after his departure. Mr. Claverel continued to puff his cigar and read the newspaper for some time after this appeal; but when the really distressed woman repeated, "What *do* you think, Sammy?" and went on to say he had left everything in his room as though he expected to be back in a little while, that a book was open on the table, that his watch hung on a nail at the head of the bed, that she could not see as he had taken anything with him, and that it seemed *so* strange—he threw down the remnant of his cigar, and said, "When he wears out his clothes and gets hungry, he'll come back, Dolly, I'll warrant you. He's gone to his uncle Peter's, like enough; when I go to town Saturday, if I see anything of Peter I'll ask him, if I think of it; but if he isn't there, he's on some wild-goose chase, so don't fret about him—what can't be cured must be endured."

"O, I don't know, I don't know; it seems to me so strange," said Mrs. Claverel.

"What is it, mother? what is it?" said little Jane, coming close and looking bewildered and anxious.

"Never mind, never mind—children mustn't ask questions," said Mr. Claverel, and then added, "we were talking about your brother Richard."

This was no particular gratification to the child. She wanted to know what they were saying, and not the subject of their conversation; but not feeling at liberty to ask any further questions, or to say anything more at all, Jane did not tell what she knew on the subject, for she had seen Richard drive away with Dr. Hilton. The parents were not, however, destined to

much longer suspense. A little freckled-faced boy, whose closely clipped red hair stood endwise all over his head, suddenly appeared, and through fright and stammering managed to make known his errand, that ten of his father's sheep had been killed the night before, and that he had come to see whether Mr. Claverel's dog, Carlo, had been at home.

"Why, yes, he has been at home. Here Carlo, here Carlo, here Carlo!" and, wagging his tail and licking his jaws, the huge watch-dog presented himself; upon which Mr. Claverel proceeded to examine and cross-examine him, as though the dumb animal were a prisoner at the bar. It was useless, however: what master ever pronounced other verdict than not guilty, on his own dog?

Meantime, the neighbors were seen hurrying in all directions from their own to the premises of Mr. Bates, where the sheep had been so unmercifully slaughtered, urged thither by curiosity, and fear for their own flocks; and Mr. Claverel among the rest, with the red-haired boy at his side, was speedily on his way. "How many did you say you lost?" he inquired.

"Ten," replied the boy; "ten of the very best; father would not have taken twenty dollars of any body's money for them yesterday."

"Whose dogs do you suspect?" continued Mr. Claverel.

"The fact is," said the boy, "we suspect a dog that looked mightily like Carlo; I saw such a one this morning going across our fields towards your house. It was a big white dog, at any rate."

"It could not have been Carlo; I never heard of a white dog killing sheep; it is not in the nater of things." And Mr. Claverel made no further inquiry.

At the door of Mr. Bates, some half dozen men were standing, discussing eagerly the probabilities and possibilities of the disaster's originating with such and such dogs; while a larger number of boys gathered in a knot at one side, and talked more earnestly and confidently. "I'll just bet you," said one, "it was Pete Hill's Growler."

"Yes," responded another, "he is the one that set them on, but I expect he had half a dozen to help him."

"I know one dog it wasn't," said the first speaker, "it wasn't ours; but if he should be proved guilty," he continued, drawing himself up, "I should be willing that justice should take its course."

At this speech there was a general murmur of admiration; each boy wished that he had said it, or that he could say something equally disinterested and noble. It was of no use, however; two such hits could not be made in one day, and the group gradually dispersed and mingled with the men, among whom the most important personage was Mr. Bates, as of right he should have been. In fact he was almost reconciled to the loss of the ten sheep, for which, as he said, he would not have taken twenty dollars of any man's money, in view of the importance to which he was suddenly elevated.

Mrs. Bates herself, while the excitement was at its height, felt more of exaltation than sorrow. She could not attend to any of her usual avocations with the energetic ability upon which she prided herself, but kept constantly going to the door, and, feigning excuses, to the cistern and the well, in order to hear what was being said; and on hearing some one say, "Have you any idea, sir, whose dogs it was?" and her husband reply, that, "If he had an idea, it would not do for him, poor as he was, to accuse even a rich man's dog," she could restrain her indignation and sturdy independence no longer, but said out aloud, addressing herself to no one in particular, "For my part, I think we live in a free country!" a hackneyed cry of the vulgar, to which no very definite idea is attached, save that no superiors are acknowledged.

"Certainly, Mrs. Bates," said Mr. Claverel, who caught the words, and was courteous enough to notice them.

"But suppose we do, of what use is it, unless we dare say what we think."

"That is certainly among our privileges; can you not say what you think?" and Mr. Claverel scratched his head in a puzzled sort of way, without precisely knowing why he felt uneasy.

"Yes, I can," answered the sturdy little woman, "but some folks can't."

"Who can't?" said Mr. Claverel, laconically.

"Bates, for one," she replied.

"What does Bates think?"

"He thinks a certain rich man's dog, not a thousand miles from here, killed the biggest part of our sheep."

"Do you mean to say it was my dog?" Mr. Claverel said, coming close to her, his blue eyes sparkling with sudden anger.

"If the shoe fits, you must wear it—I didn't say it was your dog."

"No, you seem afraid to say what you think, notwithstanding your boast about a free country. I should like to know upon what evidence your suspicions are founded."

"The evidence of my eyes and ears. I don't know as we need other evidence in this free country."

"Then you mean to say that you saw my dog kill your sheep! I understood your boy to say they were killed in the night. Was it so? And if so, how did you chance to see it?"

By this time their discussion had attracted general attention, and Mrs. Bates, pleased with the opportunity of being heard, went on to explain the grounds of her belief, which she did on this wise:—"It was along about midnight, I reckon, that I waked up; I don't know what made me, for I generally sleep pretty sound, unless some of the children are sick, or Bates is going to market, and, such times, I get but little rest. Here a while ago I took my baby, Saryanne her name is, and went visiting, fool like, (Mrs. Bates was fond of visiting,) and the little toad took the whooping-cough; I suppose it was good enough for me, but how she got it was the greatest wonder in the world. It could be no other way than that she took it of somebody in the street. I remember of stopping to speak to one person, Polly Kitterly. I wanted to buy some pasnip seed—Kitterly's folks always raised the best of vegetables—and she had her baby, Lizabeth Vanholt, in her arms; she's named for the old man, Vanholt, and they say it's like enough he will leave her a silver spoon or two when he dies. Well, I can't remember, now, whether her baby's head was towards my baby's head, or whether her baby's head was turned away from my baby's head; but if her baby's head was towards my baby's

head, and if her baby had the whooping-cough, it would have been easy for my baby to take it of her baby."

"Certainly, Mrs. Bates," said Mr. Claverel, now thoroughly good-humored, "but you forget about the sheep."

"No I haven't; I reckon I can speak a word in this free country, without talking as though I was giving state's evidence, and must have my head cut off, if I said a word more or less."

Mr. Claverel again said "Certainly," his smile almost deepening to laughter, and the voluble little woman, somewhat appeased, went on with, "Well, as I said, Saryanne took the whooping-cough, and though she had it pretty light, for she didn't whoop much, Bates wouldn't believe she had it for a good while; the other children took the whooping-cough of her, and every one of them whooped as bad as ever I saw children whoop with the whooping-cough, and I have seen children whoop with the whooping-cough till their faces were fairly black and blue. But since they got over the whooping-cough, I have scarcely been broke of my rest at all, as you may say, unless I have a spell of the tooth-ache, or newrology, or just before a rain, when my corns are troublesome; and how I happened to wake up last night, I don't know. I might have had an ugly dream, but I could'nt remember any of it, if I had; and yet it seems as if I remember something of spreading clothes down to bleach in the corner of our little peach orchard, and of hearing dogs bark, and I think likely I heard our dog barking at the neighbors' dogs" (here she looked at Mr. Claverel) "that had come to kill the sheep, for our dog will be cross to other dogs in the night, when other dogs come where our dog is, though he is just as good a dog to other dogs in the daytime, and even along in the early part of the evening, good as any dog need be to other dogs; but about midnight, and on till daylight, he is as cross a dog to other dogs as a dog can be."

Meantime, Mr. Bates, who, it must be owned, looked a little sheepish, slipped into the house, where by dint of whipping one of the children he raised such a hue and cry as brought the story of his good wife to an untimely conclusion—the whole amounting only to this, that most probably she was awake at the very

time the disaster occurred, though she had no reason for such inference, save the vague impression of a half-remembered dream; and why her suspicions had fallen on Mr. Claverel's dog, she said not. It was, however, supposed to be for that Mr. Claverel owned more land than Mr. Bates, and that Mrs. Claverel sometimes wore a black silk dress, which she had actually *hired* made.

When Mrs. Bates, having rid her bosom of its perilous stuff, had retired within doors, Mr. Jameson, a man whose opinions were regarded by his neighbors as of great weight, partly because he spoke in a deliberate and consequential sort of way, and partly that he was one of the largest landed proprietors in the county, stepping a little aside from the group, and elevating himself on a block of wood, delivered this speech: "Friends and neighbors: Whereas we have been brought together by the sudden and unexpected calamity which last night, or probably on the morning of this very day, fell with the weight of a millstone upon William A. Bates," (here Mr. Bates, overpaid for his loss, looked solemnly dignified,) "it becomes us as diligent seekers of justice to ascertain, if possible, the guilty perpetrators of the bloody deed; and whether it be your dog, (suited his gestures to his words,) or whether it be my dog, let the punishment be speedy and decisive, for there are some instances, and in my humble opinion, friends and neighbors, this is one, in which severity is mercy. I would therefore respectfully suggest, and humbly as becomes me, for I see around me gray hairs that betoken wisdom, that Dr. Hilton be forthwith professionally summoned, and that he decide, or that his doctor-stuff decide, which of our dogs has breakfasted on mutton!" And, casting a look of inquiry upon his admiring audience, Mr. Jameson descended from the block.

The boys volunteered, one after another, to go for the Doctor, till finally, the Jameson suggestion being unanimously approved, the whole assembly set out in high glee.

The village of Clovernook at that time contained but one three-story brick house, known by all the district round as the Clovernook Hotel. Here the stage coach stopped, here all bills of vendues, and school-house debates, and travelling shows,

from the Babes in the Wood, to Herr Dreisbach's lion in harness, were posted. The village had also a free school and a select school, a milliner shop, two blacksmiths' shops, two churches, and some fifty dwelling-houses; one of the best of which was Dr. Hilton's, a wooden building, painted of a bright yellow, with doors and shutters of green, and garnished with a tin sign, in two places. In front of the main entrance several stout posts were driven in the ground, with iron rings attached, for convenience in fastening horses, and against one of these a sort of ladder was placed for the benefit of country women who came to get their teeth drawn, or to consult the Doctor about teething babies. The Hotel was nearly opposite, and the immediate neighborhood was considered the business part of the town: though it was more fashionable a mile or so out west, toward Squire Middleton's, or up north where Dr. Haywood was living. In a dingy little house, in the edge of the village, lived Mr. Bates, though the farm he cultivated had many more retired and pretty situations for a residence; he had selected this, surrounded by stables and mechanics' shops, that his wife and daughter might have the advantages of good society—an advantage of which the daughter availed herself pretty largely; and though Mrs. Bates was proud of staying at home more and working harder than anybody else, she rejoiced in making her daughter a fine lady, as she deemed it, as she was brought up in idleness, and dressed in the best style, and suffered to gad and gossip from house to house as she pleased.

In truth, Sally Bates was rather a pretty girl; her eyes were dark and bright, her cheeks full and red, her curls heavy and smooth, her figure, by Mrs. Bates's rule, unexceptionable, and her waist more slender even than fashion required. Her temper was genial, and her talk exceedingly sprightly. Her particular talent consisted in shirking all hardships and captivating all the beaux, young and old, great and small, who came within her reach.

No sooner had Dr. Hilton, with saddle-bags on his arm, and his young student by his side, appeared in sight, than, tastefully arrayed in white muslin, and with a wreath of artificial flowers around her forehead, Sally appeared at the window, drawing

the curtain quite aside, that she might see how Dr. Claverel, as she called him, *did* look, though she was manifestly not unwilling that he should see how she looked in the mean time.

"Mr. Claverel," said Mr. Jameson, as the new-comers drew near, "is your oldest son, Richard, gone forth from the paternal roof to be initiated in the mysteries of the *materia medica*?"

Mr. Claverel looked puzzled and ashamed, as this was the first intimation he had had of the whereabouts of his son, and in his bewilderment he forgot to make any reply. But Mr. Bates, taking advantage of the opportunity to say something spiteful, said he didn't think Mr. Claverel had much control of the young Doctor, since his return from college.

General expressions of surprise followed, to the great mortification of Mr. Claverel, of course; and without waiting for the adjustment of the difficulty, or even asking a single question of Richard, he abruptly departed; not, however, till Mr. Bates had time to say he hoped Dr. Claverel's professional career would not be confined to the sphere in which it was likely to open. Richard, presenting a sort of half-slovenly, half-genteel appearance, was not much less mortified than his father, at being so unexpectedly brought in contact with him; it was not, however, very long before his attention was attracted by the bright eyes and flowing curls of Sally Bates, and he was presently so completely absorbed by the arrowy glances, and saucily bewitching tosses of the girl, as to quite forget his first embarrassment.

Farther and farther the lady leaned from the window, gaily fluttered the roses among her curls, when suddenly a somewhat stronger gust of air than was common, lifted the wreath from her head, and deposited it little way from the grave assembly; and Richard, recovering it with alacrity, was a moment afterward presenting it at the open window, and Miss Bates blushing and bowing her acknowledgments.

Richard was astonished that he had never before discovered her beauty. A month after, Mr. Claverel returned one morning from Clovernook, whither some errand had called him, with a hurried and unsteady step. Rumor had kindly informed him,

because she thought he ought to know, that Richard and Sally Bates were shortly to be married!

“Dolly,” he said, seating himself on the porch, as one completely exhausted, “Dolly, I wish you would hand me the sperits of camphire.”

It should already have been stated, that the suspected members of the canine tribe, having each undergone a prescribed ordeal, were honorably acquitted, except that notable guardian that “was as cross a dog to other dogs as any dog could be when other dogs disturbed his nightly watch.”

THE FOOLISH MARRIAGE.

THE first of November came round; the long dismal rains of the autumn were over; along the brooks, and from their grassy beds on the hillsides, the flowers, pale pansies, and crimson flox, and blue-bells, were beaten down and gone; that lonesome time of fading and falling was passed; the cold north breeze had blown off the melancholy haze in which the blue basement of the skies had buried itself all through October, and the atmosphere was clear and chill.

Mr. Claverel's barns were full of new hay, and golden bundles of wheat, and white sheaves of rye, and about the doors great spotted oxen, and sleek brown heifers, and frisky calves with sprouting horns, were treading knee deep in the fresh and fragrant straw. It was a goodly sight—evidence of content and abundance. The corn and the orchard fruits were also gathered, and a reign of smiling plenty blest all the toilers.

But within doors, though the hearth blazed brightly, it was quiet, very quiet, almost sad. Mr. Claverel sat in the house for the most part, reading the Bible or the newspapers; and though from the latter he sometimes read to Dolly an item of news, or a recipe for making a pie or a pudding—for she, uneducated and simple-minded woman, cared little for the theological disputations and political flourishes in which her husband took great interest—she usually kept silently about her work, mending and making, or putting the house in order, or preparing dinner or supper, in her industrious and frugal way; and her step was not so light as it used to be, and she spoke less often and less hopefully of the future. She was learning the great lesson, the deceitfulness of earthly hopes, and that "sorrow's

crowd of sorrow is remembering happier things." Her ill-starred boy had not fulfilled the prophecies in which her maternal heart once rejoiced; and no wonder she was sad, poor woman.

David and Oliver, bringing dusty slates and mouldy school books out of the closets, in which they had been for nine months stored, had commenced, for three months, their studies in the district school, where Martha and Jane were kept the year round, save when a heavy storm of rain or snow prevented their going; for the school was a mile from home, and they had neither cloaks nor overshoes—not they.

One cloudy and gusty day, when the crickets chirped to the rattle of the windows, Mr. Claverel drew shiveringly to the fire, saying, as he did so, "I am afraid, Dolly, I am going to have a spell of the ague, for the chills run over and over me, and I can't seem to get warm, though I've got on two of my red flannel shirts to-day;" and Mrs. Claverel said, as she gave him the camphor, and put a blanket over his shoulders, that she had felt all day as though something was going to happen—when a heavy stamping and a lighter sort of shuffling arrested their attention.

But let me go back a little. Rumor for once had been rightly advised; and after a little flirtation and a little youthful sentiment, in which each fancied the other to be the one above all others with whom to find sympathy and love, Richard Claverel and Sally Bates had been pronounced "husband and wife." A week or two of enchantment, a week or two of cool commonplace, and then came moody discontent, with interludes of ungenerous allusion, and then sharp words and outright quarrels.

Richard had been deceived in Sally, and Sally had been deceived in Richard. The miracle of sweetness and softness and beauty was proven an idler and a gossip, that loved nothing so much as money, and the handsome and prospectively well-to-do doctor turned out the most thriftless and ill-tempered wretch in the world. Truth is, both were right and both were wrong, as is usual in such cases; they had followed a blind and hasty impulse, and bitter reflection came after, with a long train of evils that would have been pointed out in advance,

if they could then have listened to them. The young woman had thought that Mr. Claverel, whom every body called a rich man, would provide the means of living till the Doctor should acquire his profession, but in this she was mistaken. True, the land of Mr. Claverel was worth a good deal of money, but the interest it yielded was a bare living, and this at the price of hard work. He had never more than five dollars in his pocket, for, as Mrs. Claverel said, he was a good provider, and the sugar and the coffee and the thousand other little things demanded every day, drew out almost all the funds which the sale of a steer or a colt, now and then, or a load of hay, or a few bushels of oats, brought in. Besides, David and Oliver, who were steady and industrious, must have new coats and boots every few days, as Mr. Claverel expressed it, with a trifle occasionally for their own private uses; and Martha and Jane, too, must have new bonnets and dresses, for Mrs. Claverel wanted them to look a little like other folks, and she was sure Deacon White's daughters had two dresses to their one; so it was no wonder, in view of the income and the demand, that Mr. Claverel was always a little behindhand.

He was not, however, much disposed, even if he had possessed the means, to assist Richard any farther. He had, he said, given him his time these five years, besides boarding and clothing him; then, too, he had given him a horse, and money, twice as much and twice as often as he had the other children; so it was no marvel, especially in view of the farther offence Richard had given, by marrying without his advice or consent, one against whom he had violent prejudices, that he closed the doors of his heart against him. In vain Mrs. Claverel urged that he had never seen nor spoken with the young bride; that she might be a pattern of perfection, and help Richard get along in the world, instead of being any detriment, if she only had a little advice and encouragement. Mr. Claverel only said he didn't want to see her; he knew the family to be illiterate and vulgar; he didn't suppose Joe Bates knew John Calvin from the President of the United States; and, 't was likely, the daughter knew less—that she was a silly, ill-bred gad-about, whom he should assist by teaching her to help herself.

In getting a wife, Richard had thought little of how she was to be supported; that he should be married was a fixed fact, but the unpleasant necessities that would follow, he kept in the dim distance; and, further than that, he could sell his Bucephalus, and so manage to live for a while, at any rate. This had been done, and this gusty day I spoke of came after the last penny had been spent.

Since his marriage, Richard had professed to be still pursuing his studies, sitting for the most part with his feet on the window sill or the table, in the little dusty office of Dr. Hilton; but sometimes varying the monotony by selling a box of pills or a phial of paregoric, and sometimes by making a professional call with his teacher in cases of croupy children, or slight burns or fevers.

Sometimes his meals were taken at his wife's father's, sometimes in his mother's pantry, and sometimes at the hotel, where they were never paid for. Sally still remained at home, because Richard could in no way provide for her, in fact, but "because mother could not think of parting with her," as she said. Her white shoes were quite worn out, and her white veil considerably soiled. Her father had once or twice renewed her dresses, and began to think it was time she should look to her husband. For several days he had not been to see her—why, she neither thought nor cared much, only that she wanted shoes, and knew she must present her claims. She could scarcely step out of doors any more—a state of things she was not at all accustomed to. And yet the doctor came not. What must she do? "Why, go at once and ask your husband," said her mother; "it is time he should begin to provide." So thought Sally, as well she might; and so, in her white slippers, down at the heel and out at the toe, and with the wind blowing her skirts in no very graceful fashion, she set out.

On arrival at the office, she found Dr. Claverel slipshod, and in a threadbare and greasy coat, sitting with his hat drawn over his eyes close by a red hot stove, unbosoming his sorrows to the hostler of the hotel—a negro boy, of fourteen years of age. The acquaintance had begun in the Doctor's more prosperous days, when the lad had been employed as a groom for Bucephalus; and though those days were gone, they still occasion-

ally met in the bar-room, or about the stables, (Richard was fond of horses,) on terms of social equality. The extreme heat of the stove had caused the door to be opened, so that Sally entered without interrupting the conversation.

“Why doesn’t you run away from her? I would, if I had such a wife,” she heard the boy say.

“Where in Heaven’s name shall I run to?” replied the Doctor, balancing a bottle of castor oil on two fingers. “I was a fool—I’ve been a fool all my life!”

Sally, who had some vague idea that the conversation might refer to her, though she was by no means certain, exclaimed, in no very mild tone, “I am glad you have found it out—everybody else has known it a long time.”

“Found out what?” said Richard, without evincing any surprise.

“Why, that you are a fool. You are not fit to have a wife—that’s what you are not fit for.”

“I only wish you had found it out a little sooner,” said Richard.

“I wish so as much as you *can*,” replied Sally; “I never saw the time before when I hadn’t a pair of shoes to put on my feet—just look at this;” and she presented her shoes conspicuously to view. Richard said nothing, and she continued,—“Do you expect me to go barefoot, or do you wish me to take in washing?”

“Just as you please; your mother is a good washerwoman, and might easily initiate you in the mysteries of her profession, I should think.”

“That is a pretty way to talk to your own wife. I am sure I have tried to do the best I could—I wish I was dead, where I wouldn’t trouble you any more,” and the young wife began to cry. Richard was sorry he had spoken in this way; he had some conscience; nor had the young woman yet lost all her power. So, after sitting in uneasy silence for a while, he said, “I don’t know what to do, Sally, more than you do; I have no money, and no means of getting any.”

Sally made no answer, and he continued, “Can you suggest anything?”

Upon which she sobbed out, pausing at every word, "They don't want us at home any more, I am sure; and if we could only get a little house somewhere, and live by ourselves, I should be so glad."

"It's no use talking about a house to a man that can't get shoes!"

"Suppose, then, we go to your father's for a while?"

"What for—to be turned out of doors?"

"No! we will not be turned out. I can help your mother, and you, too, can earn your board, beside studying as much as you do now; and when they get tired of us, your father can help us, as he ought to, and we can begin to live by ourselves. Something may happen to our advantage—who knows?"

Richard thought all this reasonable, but felt a terrible hesitancy about carrying it out. If his father were only from home—but to present himself before *him*, and, worse still, his wife, was what he could not summon courage to do. However, he saw no alternative, and was reluctantly dragged into obedience to the suggestion. A dejected, pitiful sort of appearance they made: Richard in shabby black gentility, and Sally in the faded bridal gear—a rose-tinted silk, and the remnant of white satin slippers.

Very glad was Mrs. Bates to see them set out, for she was tired of "slaving for such a great family;" and over and again she advised the young people to make themselves very useful—that it might be to their advantage, &c.

Poor Richard—he felt very much like a despised outcast, going back to the home whence he had been rightfully ejected, for charity. In vain he tried to persuade himself that it was fate, that all struggles were useless, and that he might as well submit with a martyr's resignation. It would not do; humility and pride and discontent and shame were warring in his bosom; malignant and evil thoughts were in his heart.

On the way they met a poor boy whose mother was sick; he was miserably clad, looked dejected, and wore his arm in a sling; he hesitated, looked timidly and inquiringly at Richard, who at first seemed not to notice him, and then, pausing, said,

abruptly, "What do you want of me? I can't do anything for you!"

"Is Dr. Hilton at home?" said the boy.

"No; and if he were, he could not do your mother any good. You had best go back as fast as you can, for most likely she will be dead before you get home."

The child was almost crying, as he said—"Mother wanted me to go more for myself than for her—you see how I have hurt myself!" and he presented his hand.

Richard loosened the bandage, and, examining it for a moment, said, "It will have to be amputated before two days, and then you will never be good for anything. You had better be dead; a poor orphan with one hand: why, you will starve to death."

The boy cried outright at this; for, though he didn't know what amputated meant, he had a vague idea that it was something fearful, and he knew what starving to death was.

Richard continued: "What business had you to hurt your hand in this way? I suppose you were doing some mischief, something for which you ought to be sent to the State's prison for life."

"No, I was doing no harm," said the boy, "only trying to make a fire; but the log was too big for me; and when I had got one end on the door-step, the other slipped off on to my hand, and crushed it as you see."

"Well," said Richard, "I knew it was something you had no right to do. Poor folks ought not to have fires; they ought to freeze to death, don't you know that, boy?"

"The Doctor is only in fun, little boy," said Sally, kindly, for she was a woman; "your mother will get well, and your hand, too; and you ought not to freeze to death, any more than other folks; but you had best go on, and leave word for Doctor Hilton to call at your mother's as soon as he comes home"—advice which the little fellow, half-smiling and half-sobbing, obeyed.

"Why did you talk so to that poor little boy?" asked Mrs. Claverel, as they walked on.

"Because," said Richard, "my heart is full of bitterness, and

it must overflow somewhere ; beside, it is no worse to speak than to think, and I can't help my thoughts—may be you can do better."

He was interrupted by a footstep. An old man walking as hurriedly as his age and feebleness would permit, passed them, leaning on a thorny staff. With that freedom which is customary in some parts of the country, he spoke to the young people. There was something gracious in his aspect, as though the way he had come was beset with pitfalls, and youth needed warning as well as encouragement. An indescribable sneer came over the countenance of Richard, as he said, "If I were you, old gray-headed man, I would cease to play such tricks ; but perhaps 'tis your vocation, and why should I meddle with you, so near the grave ? hobble on, hobble on, sir—how can your feeble sinews master fate ? I am young—in the vigor of manhood, they tell me, and yet no match for the demon." The old man, probably thinking the youth demented, looked pityingly on him a moment, and then went forward in silence.

The remainder of the walk was accomplished without any interchange of words. Arrived at the door, Richard tried to act like a consciously welcome guest, but his perturbation betrayed itself ; and as for Sally, her heart misgave her when she met the cold, unsmiling greeting of her father-in-law, nor could the kind efforts of Mrs. Claverel to make all smooth, dispel the sorrowful homesick feeling that came over her. Each tried to act as it was wished to feel, but the constraint would not be thawed away, and the first afternoon passed uncomfortably enough. Mr. Claverel read, or affected to read ; the women kept up some sort of talk, but it was on the surface ; their ungenial natures would not sympathize, and Richard, finding some sort of relief in employment, and willing to escape from his father's presence, set about cutting wood—an employment never before tasteful to him ; and it was not till tea time that he presented himself, tired and chilled with the unusual exposure.

"The wind blows like snow," said Mr. Claverel, going to the window. "You had best get tea a little earlier than common, Dolly, or the Doctor and his lady will have a dark walk home."

This was purposely said to humiliate them, for he had no

idea that they intended to go home; nor did they, that day, nor the next, nor the next; and it may readily be imagined that affairs beginning so ill did not end well.

So far from being any help, the young people were a continual source of discomfort and trouble. Mrs. Claverel soon grew tired of trying to make matters pleasant, since all her efforts were unavailing; and so they went from bad to worse. At last they became very weary of each other, both the young people and the old; and one morning, after some unusual dissatisfaction, Sally put on her white bonnet, and went to her mother.

THE YOUNG DOCTOR'S WAY IN THE WORLD.

For a time Sally continued to reside with her mother, and Richard with his, without seeing each other, except by an occasional interchange of calls. This of course gave rise to much scandal in the neighborhood, which of all things Mrs. Claverel most dreaded. Mean time the birth of a daughter gave some sort of momentary strength to the feeble tie existing between the young husband and wife.

“Don’t you think, Sammy,” said Mrs. Claverel, one morning, as she took up one of his red flannel shirts to mend, “don’t you think the old speckled cow is getting a little past her prime?”

It is a much easier thing to fall in with the observation of another, when we are not particularly interested, than to express a different opinion, and, without looking up, Mr. Claverel said, simply, “I don’t know but she is.”

After a few minutes of silence, Mrs. Claverel continued, in pursuance of some train of thought, “Did you see how the black mare acted this morning?”

Mr. Claverel was deeply engaged in one of Van Buren’s messages, and made no reply; so the good woman went on, “It seems to me I never saw her act so bad before. It was as much as David could do to get her started; and when she did go at last, Tom had the whole of the load to pull. It seems to me I would sell her along pretty soon, if I saw a good opportunity. Don’t you think so?”

“What is it?” said Mr. Claverel, just beginning to understand that his wife was talking to him. Then, seeing her occu-

pation, he added, "I wish, Dolly, while you are about it, you would just line those sleeves through, from the elbow to the shoulder. I feel a little of the rheumatis this morning."

Of course, Mrs. Claverel thought it would be a good plan; but, before it was accomplished, she managed to make her meaning perfectly understood.

"It's no use," said Mr. Claverel, at first; "the speckled cow is worth twice what she will bring; and as for the mare, I could not get half the vally of her. Besides, I could not carry on the farm without her."

"Why, Sammy, I don't see how she is worth more to you than to any one else; and Oliver wants to break his colt now, and then I expect you will have no use for the mare at all."

"Well, if I could sell them, I don't particularly need the money. I can sell oats and hay enough to pay my taxes, and I don't like to part with my critters."

"I think may be, if Richard had a little start, enough to go to housekeeping with, he and Sally would try to get along. If they were in their own house, and had some encouragement to do, perhaps they might—who knows? Sally has a bed and bureau, and a half dozen chairs; and if we can give them a little more, they will manage nicely. It seems a pity, when they are disposed to do as well as they can, that we should offer them no countenance."

Mr. Claverel said nothing. He seemed in a troubled study.

"The baby grows finely," continued Mrs. Claverel, talking rather *for* Mr. Claverel than to him. "I was in there yesterday for the first time. I didn't much want to go there, but I was coming by, and Mrs. Bates, she was out in the yard, and so insisted on my going in just a minute, that I couldn't well get off. You know it couldn't take me but just a minute, Sammy, and I thought if it would do them any good, why, it would not do me any harm, and so I stopped just a little bit."

There was a long pause after this apologetic speech, which, the husband not seeming disposed to interrupt it, gave the good wife an uncomfortable sensation. However, she rallied presently; and after slipping her hand under the patch, and saying, "Isn't that thick and warm?" she said, "They want you to

come, and I told them I'd tell you, but you had so much to do, I didn't much expect you'd go, and that you were no hand to go to any place. They talk of calling the baby Dolly—an old fashioned sort of name; I should not think they would like it."

"Better call it Folly," said Mr. Claverel, at which the wife laughed, and said she thought so too, though she felt no inclination whatever to laugh, but wished in some way to put her husband in good humor, which in some sort she did, though for the time he seemed much more interested in the message than in anything which his wife said. A week or two after this conversation, Mr. Claverel one morning took a pair of old horse-shoes in one hand, and tying a rope about the neck of Oliver's colt, set out for Clovernook. He walked slowly, for the refractory colt—a rough-haired, long-legged, long-tailed, sorrel animal, that had not yet attained his best development—pulled backward, to the extent of his halter and neck together.

To reach the blacksmith's, he passed the house of Mr. Bates; and though he did not turn his head in that direction, he saw at the window his daughter-in-law, with her baby in her arms. She saw him, and with her heart softened toward everybody, with a strange, new feeling, she called him to come in, just a moment, and see little Dolly. He hesitated a moment, then tied the colt to the gate-post, and walked straight into the house. A moment more, and his grandchild was in his arms.

A week or two more, and the sorrel colt, which Oliver called Democrat, (he was a stout politician, after the order of his father,) was soberly at work by the side of Tom, and the black mare and the speckled cow were no longer among the chattels of Mr. Claverel; and between the old homestead and the village, Richard had taken up his abode. The house he occupied was a wooden building, of small size and pretensions; nevertheless, it had an air of decency and comfort about it. The carpet was very pretty, as Mrs. Bates thought, the curtains tasteful, and the other furniture good and useful. The front of the house near the door was garnished with the sign of "Dr. Claverel," and the stable, on the back of the lot, was filled with hay and corn for Richard's new pony. He intended to commence practice at once. It was no use, he thought, to study any longer; he knew

about as much as Dr. Hilton, though he hadn't attended lectures, and hadn't a regular diploma, and it was not so easy to make other people believe it. However, baskets of provision, enough for the consumption of a month, were provided by Mrs. Claverel and Mrs. Bates, and the young people began to make their own way in the world.

Richard rocked the cradle while Sally cooked the dinner, and Sally rocked while Richard saddled his pony and rode about the neighborhood, as though professionally engaged. Thus matters went on for a time, but at the end a month, Richard's riding was still all make-believe. The hay was gone from the stable, the flour and meat from the larder, the wood required to be replenished, and fear and anxiety began to usurp the place of hope and satisfaction.

Daily Richard went backward and forward between his father's and his own home, bearing a basket of apples or potatoes, and daily Martha and Jane addressed him as Dr. Claverel, and inquired, with mock sincerity, after the health of his patients. "How much do you want?" they would ask sometimes—"a dollar's worth, or less? we don't do business on the credit system." Mrs. Claverel would say, "Come, come!" by way of reproof, while Richard remained silent from mortification.

The spring brightened into summer, and the half-made garden was overgrown with weeds, while in-doors a cross baby cried in the cradle, and the mother, languid and weary of waiting for the better time, grew more and more dissatisfied, neglecting the sources of comfort she had, because she had not more.

One morning, after a restless night with the fretful child, she arose, more languid and disquieted than usual. There was no fire to prepare breakfast, and no breakfast to prepare; dull, leaden clouds hung over all the sky; no breath of air stirred the leaves, among which the spiders were lazily spinning; the birds twittered feebly and faintly, but there was no joyous outburst of song. Presently the thunder growled in the far distance, and rumbled heavily up the sky; the day was going to be stormy.

Once or twice Sally called her husband to arise, and, if pos-

sible, get some wood for a fire before the rain set in; but he dozed on, paying no heed to her remarks or advice; and approaching near where the fire should be, she rocked her baby to and fro, in a wretched and sullen mood, looking out on the storm. There was no food, nor fire, nor money in the house. Neither was there any interchange of kind words, or hopes, or wishes, to keep alive in their hearts the love that was fast dying out. At last the noon was come; it grew lighter, and the rain nearly ceased.

The poor woman could restrain her sorrow and her reproaches no longer, and once more turning to Richard, asked him if he intended to leave her to starve to death.

"What would you have me do," he said: "go out in this storm and ask charity? I have no heart and no hope—nothing but a discontented and reproachful wife,

'Would that I were dead before thee!'"

Tears followed on her part; then bitterer reproaches; then harsh words from each to each; and then sullen silence and dogged resolves. Toward sunset, with her baby in her arms, and tears in her eyes, Sally set out in the rain for home, while Richard remained in the desolate and deserted house—wretched, very wretched.

The sun went down; the rain fell on and on; without and within, all was dark, and the heart of Richard was darkest of all. He was hungry, though he scarcely felt that; but weary of himself and of the world, the hours dragged slowly by. All day he sat perfectly still, with his arms folded across his bosom, and his eyes bent on the ground. At last he arose, pacing restlessly from side to side of the little room, beginning a train of reflection sometimes with, "I might do better if I would," but invariably ending with, "I would do better if I could." Violent feelings of joy or pain must exhaust themselves at last, and the tumult in the bosom of the young man at length gave way to the settled calmness of despair. After a search of some minutes, he succeeded in finding the remnant of a tallow candle, by the light of which he read the miserable conclusion of the sorrowful story of Chatterton; but he gathered no courage from

the fact that the day after his suicide "there came a man in the city inquiring for him." He only said it was better that he should die than live. An evil sign was in his house of life, which only the shadow of the grave could sweep away; and to die was to give the echo of his name to the world. So, the long night, in darkness and silence, he mused.

The next morning, haggard and worn and hungry, he returned to his father's house, and his mother listened patiently and lovingly to the old story: his wife had cruelly deserted him, depriving him of the solace of his child; in fact, she had been unkind and unprovident from the first; and had she remained, her conduct might ultimately have broken his heart. So wretched and helpless and hopeless he looked, that even his father was softened, and forbore to reproach, if he did not soothe and encourage. He was resolved to give up his profession, for he had neither the tact nor the talent for its prosecution; he would come back home, and assist his brothers in the cultivation of the farm. Agreeably to this resolve, Democrat and Tom were harnessed to the market-wagon, and the goods belonging to the husband were separated and removed from those belonging to the wife. The sign was taken down, and though Richard was careful to deposit it where it would neither be seen by himself nor any one else, as he thought, Martha and Jane, in some of those mysterious searches of which children are so fond, would sometimes bring it to light, and, tacking it to the door of his room, hide in some neighboring nook to watch his coming, and laugh over his surprise and mortification.

After a few days of pretty energetic endeavor to be useful, Richard began to relapse to his former apathy and indifference. Sometimes he would sit in his chamber and read his old medical books, sometimes he mounted his pony and rode about the neighborhood, no one knew for what, nor do I think he knew himself.

Meantime, rumor became current that Mr. Bates was about to sell out and move to town—a rumor which had confirmation in the bills posted in front of the Clovernook Hotel, and the principal grocery store, as also on the graveyard fence, and the gate-posts of Mr. Claverel, at one extremity of the village, and

of Deacon Whitfield, about a mile away, stating, in large printed letters, that there "would be sold at public vendue, on the first of August, at the house of Mr. Bates, all the following property, viz., three milch cows, one patent churn, with a lot of dairy ware and family crockery; two feather beds, picked from Mr. Bates's own geese, and warranted prime; one bureau, one breakfast table, and half a dozen chairs. Also, two draught-horses, one fanning mill, one plough, with a great variety of farming and household utensils, too numerous to mention."

Mrs. Bates had asserted, as it was reported, that she could not live in the same neighborhood with the Claverels. So, in course of time, fanning mill and feather beds, milch cows and breakfast table, were disposed of, and Mr. Bates and family moved to the city, and opened a boarding-house for tailors, milliners, and errand-boys—Sally chiefly doing the honors, and her mother the work. The children were thus deprived of the fresh air, and free, healthful exercise, to which they had been accustomed; their simple and comfortable clothing was abandoned for something like other children's, more expensive than they could afford, and more fashionable than durable or agreeable. Consequently, they became, as their mother thought, very much improved; that is, they had, in place of full, dimpled cheeks, and rosy arms, and flowing hair, a paler and more delicate complexion, and broad, white pantalettes, and long braids hanging down their backs, liberally ornamented at the ends with very bright ribbons. As for the boys, I can't describe the buttons, and tassels, and shining belts, that set them off; but it was all over-strained, and not precisely the right thing; nor could they learn to feel as much at ease as in their loose trowsers in the hay-field. The city air and the neglectful mother didn't agree with the baby, and on the cushion of the rocking-chair she lay, fretting by the hour, or falling over the shoulder of a nurse-girl, not old enough nor strong enough to support her; or was carried from place to place, with her skirts of two yards in length trailing to the ground. The name of Dolly was abandoned or metamorphosed to Dora. Poor little baby, its name was never written, even on its tombstone; and what availed the change, for the summer was not gone till its languid

arms were folded and its feet straightened for the grave. A few natural tears, a vacuum for some days, and then the white lace that edged its long dresses served to set off the mourning of the young mother. Peace to the unknown little child, fallen asleep in innocency, to wake in the bosom of the Good Shepherd. It had no need of torture to be made pure. The fire-crown, and the worm that never dies, are not for those over whom sounds ever the sweet music, "Suffer them to come unto me, and forbid them not." Away under the sun-set clouds, neglected and sunken, is the grave which the ill-starred father never saw, and about which the hands of the mother planted no flowers

I marvel, sometimes, when I see mothers who will not be comforted, mourning for the deaths of their children. They forget that the beauty of immortal youth is theirs; they forget the fullness of sorrow that is in the world; the moaning that runs through the universe, since the downward beating of the starry wings of Lucifer brought the echoes from below.

Sooner or later we grow weary, and covet for our bleeding feet and broken hearts the comfort of the grave; for life has no good unmixed with evil. The laurel twines itself only about haggard and aching brows; under the flame that streams across the centuries lie the gray ashes of all dearest hopes; the great waves of despair beat ever against the citadel of joy, until we are glad to fold the darkness about us, and go down to the narrow house, there, at least, to rest. No troubling dream disturbs the pillow, no necessity to labor or to wait, calls us away from the quiet, to front, with fainting and failing powers, the terrors of adverse destiny. The morning goes, and comes again, and again, but visits our eyelids with no unwelcome light. The sobbing rains of the spring-time beautify with flowers the covering that is over us, the dry leaves of autumn drop down, and the white snows of winter settle over the grave-mound like the sheet over the newly dead; but to the pale sleepers it is all the same, for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, in the grave. For myself, many that I have loved have gone from me to return back no more. The golden curls of childhood, the dark, heavy tresses of mature

life, and the thin, silvery locks of old age, have been hidden from my eyes by the shroud-folds; but among them all there is not one that I would summon to take up again the burden of life. Were they here, my weakness might fasten itself upon their strength, and my lagging footsteps hold them back from the aims of ambition, the reward of endeavor.

CONTRASTED VISITORS.

SATURDAY night! Who has not rejoiced when the week's affairs were wound up, even though they may have been attended with no unusual sorrow or solicitude. The weight of care is lightened for a moment, and we breathe freely; there is then less looking before and after, less sighing for what is not, than at other times. In the city, the close of the week and the approach of the Sabbath are more manifestly apprehended, perhaps; but in the country, they are felt. The oxen are unyoked and left to graze over the hills for a day; the plough, or the work, of whatever sort it may be, stands still; a hush, unbroken by the woodman's axe or the laborer's song, spreads itself over all; and the solemn ringing of the village bell calls every one to come up and worship. There is no music of chimes, there are no cross-crowned towers, no gorgeous altars, no elaborate rituals, nor paid choirs, to fill long, dark aisles with unnatural trills—

“As if God's ear would bend with childish favor
To the poor flattery of the organ keys.”

The very birds seem to sing less jocundly, and their songs sound through the woods like anthems; and the winds, the priesthood of the air, in prophetic tones, admonish the soul, till the sun goes down in purple fire, and over the sky's blue border the stars come up white and cold.

Sometimes, in country places, the Sabbath is made a time for visiting; nor is it thus profaned, for it is generally among people whose occupations require all their attention through the week, and who, after quietly enjoying the hospitality of

some dear friend or brother, partake with him also a spiritual feast in the house of God. There is no ostentatious display, no noise or bustle necessary for the entertainment, but the visitors lend their aid in the performance of some labor of love, and so, during their stay, make less trouble than they prevent. The women folks, who of course sleep in the spare bed, "dainty and lavendered," spread it smoothly and get the whole chamber in order before they descend, and make themselves further useful, often, in laying the cloth and assisting about breakfast, which is easily accomplished with the asking of an occasional question; such as, whether to use the white-handled knives and forks or the horn ones, the plain china or the gilt, the tin or the britannia coffee-pot; in all of which cases the visitor knows well enough that the white-handled knives and forks, and the gilt china, and the britannia coffee-pot, are to be used. Meanwhile, the men-folks inspect cribs and sheds and barn, proposing improvements for themselves from what they see, or suggesting improvements for their neighbor, while they give the horses their oats, or carry the hay to the sheep, or milk a cow, "just because they would rather do it than not"—neither offering hindrance, nor disorganizing the usual course of things. If it be known that Uncle John's or Aunt Mary's family, or any other folks, are coming, the preparations are all made on Saturday. At such times, wo to the chickens that have saucy habits of coming into the house. With all diligence the children search through hay-mows and straw-heaps, and sometimes make exploring expeditions into patches of weeds, for new hen's nests; scrubbing and dusting are done with unusual care; a pound-cake and a pudding are baked; and toward sunset all the family appear in their holiday gear, awaiting with smiling countenances the crowning event, the arrival of "the company." Such an event was about to occur at Mr. Claverel's. The week's work was finished; David and Oliver were breaking their colts, Democrat and Reuben, into the mysteries of some fantastic tricks; Mr. Claverel was reading some political essay in the *Republican*, while Dolly crimped the border of her cap with Richard's penknife; and Martha and Jane, shivering though they were, sat close at the front gate, eager to catch the

first glimpse of Uncle Peter's team. Richard, utterly indifferent, or affecting to be so, sat in his room, seesawing on a violin; and yet the coming of Uncle Peter was to be the beginning of a new era in his life.

"Oh, mother, mother, look quick and see if this is not them, just coming over the hill," said both the girls at once. Mrs. Claverel arose and looked from the window, saying, as she did so, "Peter has a new horse on the near side, if it is him; but, Sammy, hadn't you best go out and open the gate, at any rate?"

"Call Richard to go," he answered; but the children ran out again, saying they could do it, for they thought that would make it uncle Peter; and Mrs. Claverel, saying she guessed they could do it just as well as anybody, left Richard to the enjoyment of his violin. Anxiously, and almost tremblingly, the children gazed; presently, the white cover and the little green wagon were in full sight, and there, side by side, sat Uncle Peter and Aunt Jane. Briskly the journey was concluded, and as, having smiled and nodded to the children, they trotted down the gravel walk, the rattling of the wheels announced to all that they were come. Mrs. Claverel, in her newly crimped cap and smoothly ironed dress, and with one hand in the sock she was mending—for she was never idle—came forth to give her welcome, attended by "Sammy," with the open *Republican* in one hand, and a Windsor chair in the other, which he proffered, by way of a step. What a joyous shaking of hands there was, how many kind inquiries about all at home, from the children to Billy, the hired man—and even the old house-dog was not forgotten. Then came the unpacking of a variety of little presents, in packages, jars, and baskets—for aunt Jane never came empty-handed—she always had something that she knew Dolly would like so well! some of her currant jelly, or dried pears, so nice in case of sickness, or a fresh-baked loaf-cake, which she thought the children might like because Aunt Jane made it, and not but that Dolly could make a great deal better.

Aunt Jane was a good woman; kind deeds and words flowed from her heart as spontaneously as water from its fountain.

She knew nothing of the arts and blandishments of cultivated life; nothing of its heartless and specious deceptions; but a disposition to please is better than conformity to rules, and everybody was happy in Aunt Jane's society. She was not my Aunt Jane, any more than Uncle Dale was my Uncle Dale, nor so much indeed; I wish she was, for she is still living, and well stricken in years she must be, too, for, as I remember her she was forty, I suppose—and that is a long time ago. In the shadow of the maple, where Uncle Peter often rested from his labors, he is now taking his last rest. He was many years older than his wife; even at the bridal, his hair was white; but her flirtations gave him little annoyance, as

“Along the cool, sequestered vale of life,
He kept the even tenor of his way;”

and when the end came, he was resigned and happy.

“Keep the old homestead, Jenny,” he said, “and Billy to tend the farm: he knows all my ways of doing. I don't want any new-fangled ploughs or harrows brought into use. Go and visit Sammy's folks once in three months, just as though I were with you; and do not grieve, Jenny, but kiss me now, and let me go to sleep,” and, smoothing the gray hair from his forehead, Jenny did kiss him, as fervently as twenty years before, and the smile that came over his features was never afterwards disturbed. But it is not with the sad end of the journey that I have to deal, nor much even with the living years, only as this one visit influenced the destiny of Richard.

The sun was down, and the lamp lighted, and the table spread for supper. Democrat and Reuben, whose stalls were to be occupied by Uncle Peter's horses, were turned out to race in the orchard, and the violin was mute. The rattling of the stage coach along the turnpike arrested their attention. There was a sudden pause, a sound of voices, then a driving forward again; and presently there was a loud rap on the door, and, responsive to Mr. Claverel's distinct “Come in,” a fat little woman entered, whom, under drooping feathers and muffling furs, it was difficult to recognise as Mrs. Bates. Mr. Claverel received her with cold formality, Richard with blank surprise,

and Mrs. Claverel with a strained and uncomfortable effort at hospitality.

A little very urgent business had brought her, she said, as she accepted the invitation to "take off her things." "You see," she continued, seating herself by aunt Jane, "it was my daughter that Richard Claverel here married. She made him a good wife, if ever a woman made a good wife. I don't say this because I am her mother, and she is my daughter; because if I was not her mother, nor she my daughter, I could see that she was a good wife, just as well as I can see now that she was a good wife, and it was all from his own evil disposition that my daughter was forced to abandoning his house. I haven't the vanity to think my daughter an angel, but I do think an angel could not have lived with him, any more than my daughter could live with him; but an angel, seeing his evil disposition, would have had to abandoning him, just as my daughter, seeing his evil disposition, had to abandoning him." There is no telling how much longer she would have gone on but for the interference of Mr. Claverel, who, after the exclamation, "A fool's mouth hath no drought," requested that whatever business she might have should be transacted with him.

Richard had made his escape, followed by Uncle Peter, who preached him an excellent sermon from the text, "Never give up." At first, he said it was no use; he should always have bad luck; that if other folks could do better, he hoped they would—but that he couldn't. Gradually, however, he yielded by little and little, and began to take courage and hope.

"I forgot," said Mrs. Bates, addressing Mr. Claverel, "that you are the governor. I suppose you would like to have me get down on my knees, and ask you if you would please to let me speak a word; but I can tell you, Sammy Claverel, it will not be the Widder Bates that gets on her knees to the like of you. No: the Widder Bates has a little too much spirit for to get down on her knees to you, Sammy Claverel, or the like of you, Sammy Claverel—the Widder Bates tells you that to your face, Sammy Claverel." Yes, our old acquaintance was a widow now: poor Bates—when his little farm was sold, his occupation was gone. Temptation met and overcame him.

The strength and independence of the yeoman degenerated into the weakness and imbecility of the drunkard; and living awhile a pitiable wretch, he died an outcast from the love of his own wife and children.

“Can’t the business just be put off till we have taken a little bit of tea and eaten a mouthful or two of supper?” said Mrs. Claverel.

But Mrs. Bates, who felt invested by her widowhood with a sort of dignity, and loved to make allusion to her lonely and unprotected state, replied that the Widder Bates would say what she had to say without any supper; that she was a lone body, but for all that, she wouldn’t be beholden to her foes!

“Come and eat like a woman,” Mr. Claverel said; “you’ve rid from town, and must be hungry. I don’t pretend to be your friend, but I’m not your enemy; and now that you are in my house, you are welcome to eat, though I hope this may be your last visit.”

Adjusting her black bonnet so as to show to good advantage the red artificial flowers in her cap, Mrs. Bates said she hoped it would be her last visit; that she had come to say something that would have been very much to Mr. Claverel’s advantage, and that she would rather be to the advantage of a black slave than to one’s disadvantage; but that if he was not a mind to have an advantage, when a lone widder had come to offer him an advantage, to her own disadvantage, she didn’t know as she was bound to force an advantage into his hands to her own disadvantage.

Mr. Claverel said if she had made such sacrifice on his account, he was sorry; but that if she had anything to propose that would be to their mutual advantage, he was ready to hear it.

“Maby you remember our black cow?” said Mrs. Bates, re-seating herself.

“She got most of her living in my paster: so I have some reason to remember her.”

“Maby you have other reasons?”

“Only that she was an ugly old critter, that one would not

be likely to forget, and that she could let down the bars as well as I."

"And you as well as she—so folks say, at any rate."

"What of that? Would I put your cow in my paster?"

"Opinions differ—some says what you wouldn't like to hear."

The angry glow came into Mr. Claverel's face, as he said—

"Speak plainly, and to the point; I don't understand you."

"I did speak to the point—the Widder Bates isn't afeard."

"Then say out what yuo have to say."

"I've said, as plain as words can say, that if a rich man had a spite to a poor man, he might turn the poor man's cow into his own meader, and let her eat herself to death, just because he was a rich man that the law couldn't touch, and had a spite to a poor man that the law could take up and hang if he said a word."

"Ay, ay, I understand," said Mr. Claverel, for her talk was too ludicrous to make him angry; "but if any one believed your insinuations, I don't see that it would be much to my advantage."

"If I am a mind to tell it, it will be to your disadvantage; and if I don't tell it, it will be to your advantage; but do you suppose I am going to conceal it for nothing?"

"Do as you please; but if you think I will pay you money to keep you from circulating falsehoods, you are mistaken. Is this the business you came to transact?"

"I am a poor lone widder, and likely I don't begin business the way business would be begun by a lawyer who learns his business out of books; but I am coming, as fast as I can, to more important business, for the black cow is dead now, poor old critter, and whether she hooked down the bars with her horns and got into your meader, or whether she got into your meader without hooking down the bars with her horns to get into your meader, makes no difference, now, seeing that she got into your meadow some way, and died on that account, taking as good as twenty dollars out of our pockets; but, as I said, that is neither here nor there."

"What *is*?" asked Mr. Claverel.

“Why,” said Mrs. Bates, after some hesitation, “there is a young man boarding with me that is a lawyer, and knows about business, and how it ort to be done. He is from one of the cities east of the mountings, and he says that my daughter can get a divorce as easy as to turn her hand over, he says; and he says, he says there will be no difficulty at all in the case, he says.”

“Well,” said Mr. Claverel; and Mrs. Bates continued: “And the lawyer says, he says that it will be greatly to your disgrace, he says, to have the facts brought before the public, and he says, he says that if it was himself, he says, he would rather pay a thousand dollars, he says, than to have it brought before the public, he says; so I thought I would come and tell you what he said, he said, for he said he would rather pay a thousand dollars, he said, than to have the facts brought out, he said.”

I will not dwell longer upon the important business which, by degrees, Mrs. Bates managed to explain. Enough that her plan failed, and that she left the house in high anger, saying, as she did so, that she was “convinced, now, that the black cow had some help about getting into the meader, and that the lawyer said, he said that there would be no difficulty in the way of a divorce, he said.”

Though Richard kept out of hearing of the conversation, he knew what it was, and was so humiliated that Aunt Jane should have heard it, that he would fain have crept out of the world; and though he had been once or twice called to supper, he delayed to go, but remained on the porch, apparently watching the clouds that were driving fleetly up the sky, now obscuring the moon and stars, and now leaving their broad, full light to stream on the world.

A storm of sorrowful passion swept him away from the coldness and selfishness that were a part of his nature, and he longed for an opportunity of doing or saying something kind—something that should prove him not utterly lost. Carlo came close and rubbed his shaggy sides against him. “Poor fellow!” said Richard, “come in and I will give you some supper.”

“The wind blows up like snow, don’t it?” said Aunt Jane, addressing Richard, as though unconscious of his thoughts and

feelings. "But we are waiting supper for you, so never mind the clouds."

"Are you?" said Richard. "I didn't know it was ready." And taking Carlo by the collar, he followed Aunt Jane into the house, and making his supper of dry bread, which he held in one hand, he fed the dog with the other. The table was luxuriously spread, but he had no appetite; and after going through the formula, he retired to his chamber, and drew out from its dusty closet, the old brown hair trunk, and after replacing a tack or two, and brushing it up to make it look as respectable as possible, he carefully wrapped in a "Republican" the sign of Dr. Claverel, and placed it in the bottom—next came the violin, and then the various articles that made up his wardrobe—the trunk was locked, and seating himself by the window, he looked at the clouds and thought of the future all the long night.

A NEW START.

THE hush of the Sabbath evening hung over the world. Youths and maidens were crossing the green fields to the music of some rustic chapel, as the last light that burned about the sunset went out, and twilight opened her dusky wing, full of stars.

The rumbling of the wheels that went down the grass-grown lane, now dragging heavily through some deep rut, and now gliding smoothly along the level sward again, scarce disturbed the silence. The cattle that lay along by the fence, chewing the cud quietly, their sleek backs gray with frost, looked up with instinctive recognition, and the blue smoke curled upward from the old mossy and steep-roofed homestead, and the light (how far a little candle throws its beams!) shone forth its welcome from the narrow and old-fashioned window. They were almost home—Uncle Peter and Aunt Jane; they had had a good visit, but still they were glad to get back.

Poor Richard Claverel! there was no eye to look brighter for his coming; and as he sat on the little trunk that contained all his earthly effects, with his face turned away from his relations, he was sad, for he was going forth to try once more if there were energy or manhood in him, though he secretly felt there was neither, for he was convinced, at least, that he was really ill-starred.

“If it had been thus or thus,” he would say, “I might have been different;” for he was vexed and maddened against everything for being what he was. Circumstances above his ordering had shaped his destiny, as he thought, and so he sat, helpless and faithless, and let the current drift him as it would.

What poor apologists we are, and how our judgments lean weakly in favor of ourselves. What is crime in another, in us is privilege, or chance; rules that are sacredly binding to others, we may trespass, if we will, for there is some sweet reservation of mercy for us that violated justice seals away from others; and so we sin, and draw after us a long train of evil and sorrow and remorse, even to the edges of the grave; and pity us, our Father! if we also dim the pure radiance of eternity. How hardly is the spirit taught, amid all the trials and weaknesses and temptations of our mortality, to shape its upward flight!

Richard was sad; for a thousand times over we may say to ourselves, Can my weak hands wrest my destiny from the power of Omniscience? Can I warp circumstances to my will? Can I be other than I am? and so, yield to the sway of blind impulse; but a voice that condemns us—a still, small voice—is speaking all the while in our hearts, and making itself felt above our senseless declamation. Turn right about from the tempter, weak idler, and work—work diligently and earnestly, doing what your hand finds to do with your *might*—and the wicked one will flee away. No mere intellectual resolve, though never so well contrived, is strong enough, without work. If you come to a rock that you can neither blast nor break, nor dig under, nor climb over, turn aside, but work on, and by little and little you will get forward, and each step will give new strength for the next, till at last you will triumph, even though it be not till that “hoary flower that crowns extreme old age” shall have blossomed on your brow.

When the little journey was over, and the carriage stopped before the large red gate, Richard felt sadder than ever; the monotony of his thought must be broken in upon; he must encounter new faces, and make some show of gratitude for the kindness he should receive. All this was painful to him, and so, in place of talking with his cousins, Joseph and Hannah, and listening to Aunt Jane’s glowing account of Uncle Sammy Claverel’s folks, as she made the tea and changed the butter-plate from one side of the table to the other, and re-arranged the cups and saucers to the way she was used to have them,

he stole out of the house and sat down alone on an open piazza, though the air was very cold and comfortless. The cribs and barns and haystacks looked not as they looked at home; and the scythes and sickles and saws that garnished the side of the piazza were quite out of place, he thought. *His* father kept such like articles in a little room in the wagon house; and Uncle Peter seemed only half-civilized. From the end of the piazza, fronting the south, could be seen the little village of Medford, which lay some half mile away; clusters of white houses among the trees, gleaming lights, and one or two spires shooting up through the blue, were seen distinctly, for the moonlight streamed broadly over all.

There was to be the scene of his new efforts. What would be the result? Interest that he had not felt for a long time began to attach itself to the place, and he wished it were morning, that his work might begin, though he had nothing to do, except to nail the sign of "Dr. Claverel" to the gate post, for the public road was a quarter of a mile from Uncle Peter's house, and the sign must therefore be at the gate opening to the lane. To the northward, stood a thick wood, the edges of which were ragged with patches of clearing, and half decayed stumps of trees, blackened and charred; and now and then a tree with half its branches broken and crushed away by the fall of some neighboring fellow, caught the cold glimmer of the moonlight, and shivered to the passing of the wind.

In the midst of one of these openings stood a small log cabin, from the little square window of which the light streamed very brightly. There seemed to be no buildings about it; and Richard marvelled to himself as to the character of the people who lived there. A narrow strip of meadow and a part of the clearing only divided it from his view: some poor family of emigrants, he thought, or people who mend the roads. But as he looked and thought, the door opened, and a female figure was presented to his sight, which, imperfectly as he saw, belied his previous impression. Her arms were folded across her bosom, and she stood for some time perfectly still—whether in musing mood, or in expectancy of some one, it was impossible to tell. Richard was half resolved to cross the meadow, and gain a

nearer view, when Aunt Jane came to the door, and looking in every direction but the right one, exclaimed, "Where on earth is the boy?" and, as she saw him, added, "Come in; you will get your death of cold." And Richard went in, and ate with better relish, and talked more than he had before in a month. Perhaps he didn't know why, himself; very probably not; nevertheless, if he had not seen the lady in the moonlight, the humanizing sensations he now experienced would have had no place in his heart. Once or twice he was about to ask something respecting the cabin, yet he hesitated, he scarce knew why; but at length, thinking to gain indirectly the knowledge he desired, he said, "What thick woods you have at the north, here?"

"Yes," said Aunt Jane, and then proceeded to tell how a neighbor's little boy was lost there a few days previous, and that half the village had been engaged in the search; at all of which Richard expressed great wonder, adding, "It will not be left there much longer for boys to be lost in; I see there are some clearings into it already." But in this he failed, as before, and went on to say that some sort of a house stood close against the woods, if he were not mistaken; to which Aunt Jane replied, that he was not mistaken, that a house did stand there.

"It seems a desolate place. Any person living there?" asked Richard.

Aunt Jane replied that no persons lived there, laying stress on the word persons—at which the young folks exchanged smiles.

"How do you like the view of our village by moonlight?" asked Uncle Peter; and Richard's curiosity was left ungratified for that night.

His chamber chanced to be at the north end of the house, and before retiring he drew aside the curtain and surveyed the scene. The light was still burning brightly as before, and a sudden shower of red sparkles issued from the low stone chimney as he looked, and ran, burning and glimmering, along the dark, indicating that the fire was not without attention. He fell asleep, thinking of the woman; and whether she were old or

young, pretty or ugly, and concluding, of course, that she was neither old nor unpardonably plain.

The next morning, after breakfast, he discovered a small tree in the edge of the northern meadow, which, he said, wanted pruning, very badly, proffering his services at the same time.

“It is not the season,” said Uncle Peter; but Richard insisted that the season would make no difference, that, in fact, he believed it was then the best season; and in a few minutes he had crossed the meadow, and was lopping off the boughs with alacrity, glancing now and then towards the mysterious cabin. There were roses and lilacs all around the door, ivy trained over the wall, and jasmine about the window. The fence enclosing the house was of the rudest description, and just without stood the blackened stumps and trees before referred to, nor was the yard itself entirely free from them, but here they were covered with vines of wild grapes, hops, or the wild morning-glory, which in summer transformed them to columns of verdurous beauty. Just now, they were whitened with the snowflakes which had fallen during the night. The curtain was drawn close over the window, and no other sign of life was discoverable, save the smoke, which hung about the roof and settled in long blue ridges near the ground.

Richard was a long time pruning the tree, but the task was completed at length, and it proved an almost fruitless stratagem, for what he had seen heightened without satisfying his curiosity; and as he crossed the damp meadow homeward, he felt as much vexed as disappointed, and perhaps more so, when Uncle Peter said, “I think the tree is not much improved; besides, you have made your feet wet and your hands cold; but that is not the worst—you have missed seeing the prettiest girl in the whole village.”

Pretty girls were nothing to him, Richard said; and going moodily into the house, sat by the fire, with the newspaper, in which he affected to be completely absorbed.

Presently Aunt Jane came that way, to see if her yeast, which was in an earthen jar, covered over with the table-cloth, and placed close in the corner, were not rising, and, beating

it briskly with the iron spoon she said, "You asked, Dicky, something about the cabin across the field, last night?"

Richard merely said "Yes," without looking up, and she continued—

"The young woman who lives there was to see me this morning. She came in at one door the very minute you went out of the other."

"Ah," said Richard, for he was too much provoked to say more.

"Just see how my yeast is coming up!" exclaimed Aunt Jane. "My work is getting all before me. I stopped to talk too much with Caty."

Much as Richard desired to know something about the visitor, and if she were Caty, and wherefore she lived alone, he forebore to ask—so perverse is the heart.

"Come, Richard," said Uncle Peter, as he drew on his mittens, "I am going down to Medford. Won't you go along? It will be beginning business, you know; and on the way we can tack up the sign."

But Richard said he didn't feel like going, and so moped around all day.

Busily Aunt Jane kept about her work; everything was ready for her just as she was ready for it, save that her yeast did get a little before her. However, she said she believed the dough-nuts would be all the better for that; and towards evening, when she fried them, expressed her conviction of the fact, asking Richard, as she gave him two or three, on a little blue dish, if he didn't think so too. He thought them very good—probably all the better for waiting; and concluded by saying, "What good luck some people always have!"

"Yes," said Aunt Jane, "it's better to be born lucky than rich;" and she gave him another cake, telling him to keep his fingers warm with that, and go, like a good boy, and put up the sign: that he didn't know how soon Dr. Claverel might be needed. There was no resisting this kind appeal; and taking the warm cake in one hand and the sign in the other, he did as directed. When it was fastened to the gate post, he stepped a little aside, and whistling a tune, surveyed it with some degree

of pride, as the badge of his profession. While thus engaged, a light step, crushing the snow, arrested his attention, and looking up, he saw before him a young and seemingly very pretty girl, though she was too much muffled in hood and shawl to enable him to judge with much certainty. In one hand she held a small basket, and in the other two or three books. "Some school girl," thought Richard; "I will see to which of the cottages she betakes herself;" and giving the innocent sign a smart rap with the hammer, as he wondered whether she saw him, looking delightedly at his own name, he leaned against the gate to await her movements—having fixed on the cottage with green blinds as her home; "for, surely," he thought, "she cannot be walking far." Nor was he mistaken in this. The cottages stood to the east of the road, which was bordered to the west by the woods, with the clearing, and the cabin, which were away from the road, and nearly opposite Uncle Peter's. One, two, three, of the pretty cottages are passed, and he now thought, "This is the second time, to-day, I have reconnoitred in vain," when, opening a gate in the edge of the forest, the young woman began to cross the field in the direction of the little cabin. His way now lay parallel with hers, and musing whether she were the Caty who lived there alone, he walked homeward, not forgetting to remark whether her walk was terminated by the cabin door, as proved to be the case. He felt glad—triumphant as it were; he had seen the object of the last night's curiosity, and found her all his fancy painted; and entering the house, in high glee, he said, as he removed the tea-kettle, which was boiling into the fire, "Well, Aunt Jane, I have put up my sign, and more than that, I have seen Caty."

"You don't say!" said Aunt Jane, arranging the tea to draw; "but how should you know Caty Allen?"

"Caty Allen—rather pretty—is that her name?"

"That is the name of the young woman that lives in the cabin, if it was her you saw. But," added Aunt Jane, "she is not so very young, either."

This last information didn't much please Richard, and he replied that he should not think her so very old—not more than

forty. "But," he continued, "how the deuce does she live alone?"

"It's a long story, and I must go and milk my cow;" and wrapping herself in what had once been her cradle blanket, Aunt Jane went forth, and the young man remained by the fire, listening to the singing of the tea-kettle, and in a musing mood. He wondered why he didn't feel lonesome and home-sick, as he always before had felt. He supposed it was because he was at Aunt Jane's; and then the village looked beautiful in the distance on the one side, and the woods on the other. He would not have them away on any account. It was the fine background of a glorious picture.

There was a noise at the door: could Aunt Jane have milked the cow so soon? A loud rap, as with a stick; and, opening the door, the person in waiting, a mechanic or laboring man of some sort, inquired if Dr. Claverel was in. Richard answered that that was his name, drawing himself up with a sense of professional dignity; on which the stranger said, "I want you to come down and see my woman. She has suffered everything, I guess, with the toothache;" and, putting one finger in his mouth, he tried to show Richard which one he believed it was, and at the same time endeavored to tell the various remedies his woman had applied in vain—"mustard-plasters, and hops steeped in vinegar; but now it had got to jumping, and just five minutes before, she had concluded to have it drawn."

With scarce a regret for the warm fire and supper he left, Richard was off. He found his patient a pale little nervous woman, who seemed, as her husband said, to have suffered everything. Nevertheless, she still persisted in saying she would rather have her head taken off than that the Doctor should touch her tooth, and asking over and over if he thought it would be painful.

"Slightly so," said Richard. "We can't draw teeth without giving some pain, but I have never had a patient make the least complaint of my manner of operating. Let me see the tooth, madam."

A little encouraged, and a little afraid of the Doctor, the

woman opened her mouth; and without a moment's delay the fatal instrument was applied, and the offender extracted, the young Doctor saying, as he presented it to her view, "You see it is no awful thing to have a tooth drawn. Is it, madam?"

"Now, wouldn't you have been sorry," said the husband, "if the Doctor had came, and you would not have had it drawn?" And he patted her cheek, calling her a little coward.

"Have you lived long in these parts?" imagining, probably, they had not been married long, asked Richard.

"Seven years and five months and two days and about three hours. Isn't it, wifey?"

"I am sure I don't know," said the wife, blushing slightly.

"Now, you do know just as well as can be," said the husband. "You know we came the day you made the preacher the promise!"

"Oh, hush!" said the wife. "You have so many odd ways."

"Have I?" said the young man. "Let me see that little bit of a toofy?"

And Richard hastened to inquire whether there was much sickness in the village.

"Yes, sir," said the young man, "pretty considerable. She isn't well," indicating his wife. "She has never saw a well day since we have been here;" and, touching his wife's comb with his riding whip, he said, "Shan't the new Doctor come and cure you? Don't you want him to, if I want him to?"

It was soon agreed between them that the Doctor, who had so miraculously drawn the tooth, should call again in the morning, and continue his professional attentions till the woman should have quite recovered—the Doctor expressing the most sanguine expectation of fully restoring her health.

A new broom sweeps clean, is a saying that finds its application every day. Here was an instance. A poor woman had been sick for seven years without obtaining medical aid, chiefly because she washed for the Doctor who had previously lived in the village, and knew the number of his socks and shirts, as also the color of all his neckcloths. That *his* medicine could do her no good, it was very resonable to believe; but when a new man came, there was no knowing the measure of his skill. ✓

She repeated to all her neighbors the wonderful facility with which her tooth had been extracted, and affirmed that, though she died, nobody in the world should attend her but Dr. Claverel.

"I wonder if he can perform such wonders!" said one to another.

And so patronage came into his hands, and fortune at last seemed to smile; but, alas, in the brightening twilight of the morning hung the evil star.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

WHAT a continual war of good and evil there is in life, and how often we feel in these "homeless moors" of the world, in view of the bondage of wrong, that it were of all things the best if we might fly existence! but then the mystery that is lying under that terrible and awful shadow, Death! it might be even worse than this present suffering. And so, clinging to the dark and yearning for the light, we live on, in trembling hesitancy, afraid to root up the thorns which have given us shelter in some sort, lest no roses may spring in their place. The love of the flesh keeps down our prayers; the present is strong on our souls; and for the future, "it rambles out in endless aisles of mist, the further still the darker." How hard it is to think correctly and act firmly—how hard, even to be true to our convictions—

"For yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood."

Silently on the cabin roof the snow sifted and sifted until it was piled in a thick mass overhanging the eaves and the gables. Around the low stone chimney, a hand's breadth of black alone was visible. About the door the ground was bare, for the wind had been busy, as fantastic curves and curious ridges and patches of naked ground attested. Across the smooth white meadows, and along the edges of the woods, were the tracks of the rabbits, driven forth by their own hunger or the hunger of the stronger animals that hunted them from their burrows.

The rose vines were weighed to the ground, and all the limbs of the trees held their ridges of snow, save that now and then, as a stronger wind came by, a little bough shook down its burden and uplifted itself as before. The stubs in the clearing looked like beautiful sculptures, and the many stumps like higher heaps of snow.

Close to the edge of the wood, and leading to the main road, a narrow path is trodden from the cabin. It is night, a dismal winter night, and the light shines through the little window across the level snow, through the window with its drapery of frosty vines. The small brown birds that have been twittering about the door all day, now picking the crumbs which the hand of the cottage girl has kindly scattered, and now dipping their wings in some loose drift, and scattering the flakes abroad again, have gone to the favorite roost, and are quite still, one shining red foot drawn up in the warm feathers, and one clasping the bough beneath. Crooked limbs of oak and maple, and smooth-sticks of white ash, are heaped up in the deep fireplace, and the ruddy glow shines over the blue hearthstones where the cricket sits singing to himself, across the floor and along the opposite wall. How the gilt lettering shines from the shelf of books, how the face of the old-fashioned clock glistens, how the blue cups and nicely polished platters in the dressers glow again. The room is humble and very quiet, but the broad blaze and the smile of Caty makes it cheerful, and yet her smile is half sad. An hour ago she was sewing by the table, and singing happily some careless roundelay of love; then the song grew still, and she wrought on for some time in silence; then the work fell from her hands, and opening a volume, she read about some hapless shepherd who went from the flowery crofts and the white tendance of his harmless fold, "to the still beckoning of a shadowy hand, into the unseen land." But now, though her eyes are still resting on the page, she turns the leaves no more. Is she thinking of the poor shepherd, and gathering flowers to strew about his visionary corse? or sees she, in imagination,

"The rough briers that pull,
From his stray lambs, the wool?"

No; the sorrow that overspreads her face comes up from her own heart. Across the dark woods, and over the hills by the old ruinous church, the snow is heaped high and smooth over a new mound. There is no head-stone, for she was a widow, and very poor, who lies below, leaving only the humblest roof for the orphan who sits musing to-night so sadly. Yes, more than the roof—the example of a pious life and her dying blessing. She pushes the dark mass of hair away from her forehead, and leans one cheek on the thin, pallid hand, for she seems wasted with pain or care; but the expression of the face is too fixed and calm—she is not musing of the dead.

There is a sudden gust; the flame flashed higher and higher, and the door creaks; the fast-beating heart sends the crimson to her cheek. Since the day the white sheet was wrapped about her mother's coffin, she has been used to the silence and the darkness, and is not afraid. Why should the wind startle her? Perhaps she fears the coming of some simple but kind-hearted neighbor, who will repeat the old story—how wrong it is to grieve, and how much better off are the dead. Idle, idle! she knows it all; but for that knowledge did one mourner ever weep the less? She does not fear that it is aunt Jane, for her condolence is not obtrusive; she does not say, how much greater God's wisdom is than ours, and how rebellious it is to question or mourn over his providence. True, she talks of the divine goodness, of the pleasant sunshine, of the pure cold water, and the warm genial fire—of all the blessings that are in the world—and with her own hands brings them near, so near that the young orphan sees them and feels them, and rises up strengthened to go about her household cares, and give her soul to peace. Aunt Jane is one of the true comforters. She does not open afresh the closing wound, by even talking of the virtues of the dead, recounting the fortitude with which they endured suffering, and the pious resignation with which they met the great agony, nor repeat their last words, nor call back the look they wore in the coffin, and give a last obtrusive exhortation on the duty of resignedness to the will of God. She does not scrupulously avoid all mention of suffering or of death; but she makes not these the burden of all conversation. Sometimes

she sends a bowl of sweet milk, sometimes a loaf of bread or cake, sometimes the last newspaper, and sometimes even a sample of her new dress. These little things are not without meaning—they have a humanizing tendency, reconcile us to live yet in the world, and stimulate us to do in return good deeds.

In the by-ways of life, there are a great many such good women as Aunt Jane. It is not she whom Caty fears, as she turns eagerly to the door, and yet she would be no happier for *her* coming to-night. It was only the wind! there was no hand on the latch, nor does she hear the approach of any footsteps; there is only the sound of a team crushing through the snow along the highway. The clock strikes; she will not look around, but counts every stroke. Seven, only seven! It was later last night, and the night before; and, rising, she lays the embers that have fallen, together again, and resumes her work. It has been dark so long that she scarcely can think it is not later. "I have resolved," she says, "and must act as I have resolved, and what matters it whether he comes to-night or not: if he comes, it must be the last time;" and glancing at the clock, she sighed, for it was in the very hope he would come that she gathered the resolve. Oh, how long the moments were! another, and another, and another! And yet no step disturbs the silence. One minute her hands lie idle in her lap, and gazing steadily in the fire, she tries to conjure images out of the burning coals. In vain—she cannot see the maiden playing the harp, nor the church with its slender spire, nor the old man leading a child, nor the dog watching the two ducks as they swim gracefully away; she sees nothing but burning coals, though all these were here last night. Another minute, and she re-opens the closed book, and turns leaf after leaf in quick succession, but it will not do; it were as well for her to turn blank leaves as those printed ones, whether they be romance or history, or the divine insanity of dreams. Presently this truth becomes quite clear to her, and closing the book, she rises and walks to and fro across the floor, every now and then pressing her face to the window, and, seeing but the cold blank reach of snow, turns away, and walks more hurriedly than before. The clock

strikes. This time it is eight. The tears will be restrained no longer, and freely they flow, until the sounds of her emotion quite drown the footstep that rings on the threshold. The visitor seems consciously welcome, and after a slight rap, opens the door himself, saying gaily, as he enters, "And so you are not pleased to see me to-night, or your fire would be less dim, and your welcome less slow!"

And Caty, turning quickly, betrays all her feeling, and in the anguish of the moment, is not ashamed that she betrays it: "Oh, you are come at last. I am so glad you are come!"

These were not the words Caty had intended to speak to Richard, for the reader knows well enough that it was he whom she expected, he who came; but the heart spoke in spite of the prohibition laid on the lips. Nor did she shrink from the arm that encircled her, or reprove the secretly forbidden kiss.

She had been so alone, so desolate in the world, duty had seemed so hard, and the world so dark! but Richard had come, and her low-roofed cabin grew a paradise. How pleasant it was to teach the little district school, and how the children loved her, and every day brought her fruit or flowers, or whatever they chanced to have; how pleasant to go home at night and renew the cheerful fire, and sit by the table, with book or work—for then Richard was sure to come, and this, after all, was the secret that gave its new aspect to the world.

He had been successful, beyond all his hopes, and with success had come amiability; and more than this, the great purifier and refiner of life had taken up its abode in his heart; all the better qualities of his nature were expanding, blooming back to the light of a smile. He was not the selfish, despondent Richard he was of old; not at all; but full of sunny cheerfulness and hope. True, there was something of the old leaven in his nature; something of selfishness; and he still clung to the fatal delusion that he could do no otherwise than he did.

Curiosity, perhaps, and a desire to relieve the ennui which oppressed him, prompted his first visits to the cabin. He presently saw, however, the tendency of things, yet delayed to give up feeling to the mastery of judgment, until it became, if not impossible, at least a very hard thing to do. "Caty

must be very lonesome to-night," he would say, "don't you think so, Aunt Jane? Even I, perhaps, will be some relief to the old place."

Aunt Jane, in the kindness and innocency of her nature, would say, "Yes—but don't stay late, Dick;"; and so, feeling in some sort fortified by her sanction, he would go, saying, "If we be the happier for being together to-night, let the morrow take care of itself." Then, too, he would try to persuade himself that he was doing a purely disinterested and benevolent thing. Caty, naturally of a melancholy temper, would be sad, for that the wind whistled in such a dismal way; else it was cloudy and raining, and such gloomy weather affected the mind; especially of one recently bereaved; it really became his duty, at such times, to brighten the darkness as much as possible. Then, again, there was a full moon, and such nights were the loneliest in the world, worse than clouds or winds; he could neither read nor sleep; he wished some patient would call him, it would be a relief; but he had no idea one would; it would be of no use to stay at home on that account; to go to the village was too far, and Caty lived right across the meadow: he believed he would go there for a part of the evening. Such apologies he made to himself, and believed or affected to believe them sufficient, though if he had permitted any searching of his heart, he would have found the motive and the prompter of his conduct there.

When John Gilpin took his famous ride, he went because his horse would go, and when Richard Claverel went to the cabin, he went because his thoughts would go; nor did he try to curb or check them in the least. Self-sacrifice is a hard thing; to climb the iced mountain, to front the blinding sunshine of the desert, or to face a thousand foes, if there be the remotest possibility of ultimate success, were, in comparison, an easy thing. To love what seems to us lovable is human nature, and so loving, to desire the love of the being loved, is nature still.

"Who can curiously behold
The smoothness and the sheen of beauty's cheek,
Nor feel the heart can never all grow cold?"

Not the mighty bard whose life was made sorrowful by the

one great need, and who went pining out of life because no soft hands held him back; and not the humble and unheard-of villager, however much he may seem insensible to those softer spells which have their power in palaces—however quietly and coldly he appears to lead an even and sequestered life.

“I will not suffer my heart to be touched,” said Richard; but if his heart had not already been touched, he would have felt no need to say it; and when at last he could no longer conceal the truth from himself, he said, “I alone will be the sufferer, she shall never know my love, nor will I ask her to love me in return.”

What need was there that he should? And if he did not, it was only that he might have something upon which to rest his violated conscience, for he knew that

“’Twas a thousand nameless actions
Idle words can never say,
Felt without the need of utterance,
That had won her heart away.”

And so they sat together by the winter fire—Richard and Caty. She at least was innocent. As she said, she had been alone and desolate in the world; Richard had been kind to her, and she had learned to love him before she knew that he had no hand with which to give to her his heart; and now how could she tear away the shelter from her saddened life, and once more stand alone—a thousand times more alone than before. And what excuse or consolation had Richard to offer? “The world is all before us,” he said, “where to choose our place of rest. We did not give ourselves the natures we have; and are the strongest impulses of that nature to be forever crushed down? And if they are, who, in this instance, will be benefited—men, or angels? Neither. And even if they were, do we owe no duties to ourselves? I, for one, do not believe that eternal sacrifice, eternal abnegation of self, is the highest duty. Are we required to sit in the shade when the sunshine is abroad, to fold a napkin over our eyes when the stars are in heaven; or shall we sit in the genial warmth of the one, and lift our souls to the eternal grandeur of the other? Shall we turn away from the fresh fountain, and drink of the bitter and stagnant pool? No! Shall we part as you advise, and thereby break our

spirits and unfit ourselves for the good work we might otherwise do? Or shall we go through the world together, helping and strengthening each other? There is no more sacred tie than that which binds us to one another now. With you, I am strong enough to front the most adverse fortune; without you, I am poor and helpless."

Alas, for Caty. She had no answer but tears. What would Aunt Jane say? What would all the world say? And would not her own heart condemn her?

"Away in the West there are valleys as green as this; there we can make a home, there we can make new friends. None will have ever seen or heard of us, and we may live lives of usefulness and honor, for we shall neither dishonor ourselves nor the higher power. Love in its strength and purity can prompt to no wrong; and, yielding to its dictates, our lives are henceforth one, and cannot be divided. If we part, the world will be a waste, and we poor wanderers in the dark."

Whether Richard spoke sincere convictions I know not, but from my knowledge of his character I believe he did. Caty was neither a child nor an infirm creature, but she had known poverty and sorrow and all the hard struggles of life, and there is such a thing as reasoning ourselves astray. And to-night, when the torrent of anguish which fancied desertion had rolled against her was swept off, her heart was more than ever susceptible to the softer impressions.

The smooth sticks of white ash and the crooked boughs of oak and maple had long been burned to a glowing mass, the cricket sang in the hearth, now and then some heavier weight of snow fell from the shaken bough, and high and cold and pale the moon shone over all.

And in the glow of the embers, nor thinking of its genial warmth, nor listening to the song of the cricket, nor gazing up toward the moon, sat the lovers. The clock had struck many times since the girl had counted it last, but in the old cherry tree by Aunt Jane's door the cock is crowing lustily, and her light will presently be glimmering through the pane in answer to his call.

"Who called thee strong as death, O love,
Mightier thou wert and art."

SPRING, AND THE SUGAR CAMP.

THE winter was almost gone. Patches of snow lay on the northern slopes of the hills: the moss about the roots of the trees began to grow green again; the buds were swelling in the lilacs, and the little birds picking up sticks and gathering shreds of wool from the brier vines, which were reddening more every day, to build new nests or repair their old ones; and, as the village maid sits spinning the flax by the window, she sings:

“ March is piping spring’s sweet praises,
Night by night the new moon fills,
Soon the golden-hearted daisies
Will be over all the hills.”

Mr. Claverel has already laid by the coat for the coming summer, and, with the white sleeves rolled back from the red ones, is busily at work in the sugar camp. A rudely-built stone arch stands just in the edge of a hill thickly wooded with maples, and a great fire is blazing under the half dozen black kettles, of huge dimensions, filled with their sap. Jets of red flame issue from the chimney, and clouds of white vapor rise from the boiling liquid, and blow away toward the south.

Fronting the furnace, is a rudely constructed cabin, of which the side next the fire is entirely open. It is nicely carpeted with fresh straw, and furnished with a wooden bench, and a pail of “sugar water.” From the buckeye logs of which the hut is composed, fresh twigs are sprouting. How vigorous and thrifty they look, as if the trunk from which they grow had still its root in the life-giving soil! Made fast in a crevice of the wall are two of the late “*Republicans*,” so that when Mr. Claverel sits down to rest, he may also be reading a little. Over haste

is over waste, is one of his maxims, and his hard labor is tempered occasionally with a little respite; and in this way he learns whose prospects are brightest for the next Presidency, whose principles are most in accordance with his own, how to keep flies from plaguing cattle, what is the principle of the last invented plough, with now and then a certain cure for the rheumatism, though such things Mr. Claverel always protested were humbugs, enlarging at the same time on the wonderful virtues of red flannel, both as a preventive and cure. All these things he ascertained, and a great many more, that his neighbors, who did not read the *Republican*, never knew anything about.

From a deep and dark hollow, away in the thick woods, rung the axe strokes of David and Oliver, for they had gathered their books together ten days before the "rewards of merit" were distributed, and heaped them in the old closet again for a six months' rest. David had been particularly sorry for this, inasmuch as the master often selected him to "choose sides," besides pointing the younger scholars to him as a worthy example of steady and patient perseverance. Certainly his hopes of carrying off the first honor were not without foundation; nevertheless, when his father said, "I think, boys, to-morrow will be a good 'sugar day,' and, if I could only have you to help, we might get nicely under way," it required that he should say no more. A little sadly, it is true, David went to the barn and twisted a string of unspun flax, which he managed to do with his fingers and teeth, musing the while whether John Hart or Abner Betts would get the first prize. He said nothing of his reluctance to leave school, however—nothing of his intention to leave, but at night, when he returned home, he brought his books with him, tied together with the flaxen string.

Every one said, "David is a good boy;" but every one expected him to be just as patient and industrious and mild-tempered as he was; so that he received less credit, perhaps, than he would have had for but an occasional good act. Even the heart of his mother remembered Richard first.

Carlo, the house-dog, enjoyed the sugar-making vastly, and went rambling up and down the woods, now starting a rabbit from its burrow of leaves, and now barking at the foot of some

tree, from the safe top of which a squirrel is peeping down. Sometimes Martha and Jane are his companions, and sometimes they wander off by themselves, gathering curious stones, or stripping the moss—golden, and green, and brown—from the decayed logs which lay about the woods; and digging roots with bits of sticks, which they tie in bunches with dead grass, and call radishes, parsnips, &c., the while Carlo lies soberly before the fire, with his nose close to the ground, watching the jets of flame and the white vapor as it blows away on the wind, that is sometimes chilling cold as in mid-winter, and sometimes soft and bland as in April.

From the top of the dead tree in the meadow the crow calls all day long; and the rivulets, swollen with recent rains, babble noisily from the hollows, where the violets are sprouting with their circular and notched leaves, from which no blue flower is peering yet. There, too, the spotted leaves of the adder's tongue are thick, and the pale pink shoots of the mandrake are beginning to push aside the leaves. Soon the daisies will spot the southern slopes, and the daffodils and purple flags bloom flauntingly beneath the homestead windows.

The brown tops of the distant woods are all a-glow—for the sun is going down, and the waters are flashing, and the ragged shadows are growing longer. Martha and Jane and Carlo linger yet in the woods, and the ringing strokes of the axes sound yet from the hollow, and are echoed back from the distant hill. Mr. Claverel, after heaping the furnace with great logs of hickory, with heart so hard and red, and tasting the syrup to see how sweet it is growing, walks slowly homeward, a little bent, for he is tired, and with his hands crossed behind him, for he is thoughtful. The ground, which the thaw has made very soft during the day, stiffens as the sun declines, and, as he comes near his home, grows quite hard—so hard that its surface is not broken by the heifer that runs along the lane to meet him, thinking, perhaps, he has an ear of corn for her. But no—he does not stop to pat her glossy back, or say, “Get out of my path, ‘Bossy;’” and, lashing her sides with her tail, she stretches her head and neck to their full extent, and lows to some fellow across the field.

Mrs. Claverel stands at the door with a bowl of yellow butter in her hand, which she has just taken from the churn. She is tired too, but she smiles cheerfully—for she is never too tired to smile—and says, looking toward the sunset, “I think, Sammy, we shall have a pleasant day for our visit to-morrow.”

“The evening red, the morning gray,
Is a sure sign of a fair day,”

replied Mr. Claverel; and taking up a neatly arranged parcel from a chair, he seated himself, asking what it was.

Just what he might have known it was—a little present for Richard; some warm woollen socks, a new handkerchief and cravat, with two or three shirts, which nobody could make so well as his mother.

“Really, Dolly, you are always doing some good thing, and this time I am glad to know Richard deserves your kindness. I guess, however, he is successful more by hit than good wit, for he was never the boy to work and wait.”

Mrs. Claverel looked a little saddened and reproachful, but said nothing, and Mr. Claverel continued, “Well, we shall see what we shall, to-morrow; and we had best start early, hadn’t we, Dolly?” and having received an affirmative reply to this suggestion, he set about little preparations for the proposed visit to Uncle Peter’s.

THE END OF THE ILL-STARRED.

THE light wagon was drawn in front of the door, fragrant with tar and new straw; a basket of apples, and some small niceties, which Mrs. Claverel had selected, arranged for safe transportation. Before the fire hung the red flannel shirt and the new trowsers, that they might be "good and warm" in the morning; and the cap and dress, which Mrs. Claverel said were almost too gay and fashionable for *her*, but which had been purchased for the special occasion, were also placed conveniently at hand.

Martha and Jane come laughing down the lane, each with a long withered weed at her side, which she calls a horse, and before them trots the sleek heifer. She looks angry, and as if she were half inclined not to "give down her milk" to-night; and a little behind, soberly, and with axes over their shoulders, come David and Oliver. They are tired, and hoping supper will be ready.

"Oh, Martha," says Jane, as she leans her weed against the fence, and calls it putting her horse in the stable, "just look! Some old woman is coming to our house. Who can she be, riding an old white horse, and with a great basket on the horn of her saddle? She must be a peddler woman."

Martha looks up, and skipping past, with a look of wise indignation, hastens to inform her mother that Aunt Jane has come, and that her sister called her an old peddler woman!

"Why, Aunt Jane!" exclaims Mr. Claverel, as he assists her to alight, as much as to say, what in the world brings you here? But the face full of benevolent kindness, does not look as if any one was dead; and he ventures to ask if all were well

at home, to which Aunt Jane responds affirmatively, looking in her basket as she says nobody is sick or dead, as she knows of. Mr. Claverel is satisfied, and leads the white horse toward the barn. Not so, Mrs. Claverel; she feels instinctively that all is not right, and her premonitory fears point to Richard.

“Is he sick, or dead? neither—what, then?” and before Aunt Jane unties her bonnet she learns the truth. He is gone, no one knows whither, and has taken with him, as everybody supposes, the village school-mistress. Little comfort is it now to hear how well he did; how many persons he had cured, who had previously had the advice of the greatest physicians, besides trying almost everything in the world they could hear of; how much money he made, and how well everybody thought of him.

He has gone, and every one but his mother and Aunt Jane forgets the right he has done, in the wrong. Mr. Claverel says he always expected some such thing; and after supper, which he does not want, says he must go to Clovernook, and takes with him the camphor bottle to be refilled, though it is half-full now, and requires no replenishing; he merely wishes to get rid of his thoughts—that is all. He will find it a hard thing, poor man! And especially, as he will meet with many persons ready to remind him of his sorrow. Thoughtfully, he goes through the deepening twilight, thinking very sorrowfully. He does not hear the clatter of the hoofs on the road behind him, till the rider overtakes him, and reins in his horse, glossy-black, with a pink nose and a strip of white in his face.

“Good evening, worthy neighbor,” says the familiar voice; “I have been recently made aware of a fact of a very painful nature, connected intimately with yourself, but more intimately still with your eldest born, Dr. Richard Claverel. I was, as you may readily suppose, averse to receiving the evidence without demur or question, and accordingly made the most rigid scrutiny of the report, purporting to be simply a strict relation of facts; but my zealous efforts to find any flaw were signally baffled, as from the first, indeed. I had cause to fear, inasmuch as my informant, in all the multifarious relations which it has been my fortune to hold with him for a term of

years, the positive extent of which I do not remember, has proven himself a man of invariable honesty, integrity, and veracity, to the fullest and amplest meaning of those words. Therefore, I have been constrained, neighbor Claverel, to reluctant acquiescence in the now prevalent belief that your eldest born, Dr. Richard Claverel, has abandoned the practice of his profession in the hamlet of Medford, which my informant states to have been lucrative, and of a nature satisfactory to his various employers, and to have secretly departed in that dark portion of time which we are accustomed to denominate night, and to have taken with him a young woman of comely personal endowments, and mental parts—of unusual development and cleverness, who has, for a number of consecutive months, been employed in teaching the young idea how to shoot, in a small school in the aforesaid hamlet. Allow me, worthy neighbor, to offer you my sympathy on this sorrowfully interesting occasion, and to beg that you present to Mistress Claverel the assurance of my unabated and continued friendship, and regard, and esteem. A very good evening to you, worthy neighbor Claverel;” and Mr. Jameson gave the rein to his black steed, which in a prancing sideways fashion, obeyed the signal, while Mr. Claverel took the camphor bottle from his pocket and shook it violently.

But this was only the beginning of sorrows. Calling at Dr. Hilton’s for a pint of the best alcohol, as also for a little cheerful talk, he found the Doctor out, and seated in the arm-chair, awaiting his return, the loquacious Mrs. Bates. She thought likely Dr. Hilton could tell what she wanted to know: “But you,” she said, addressing Mr. Claverel, “can doubtless tell me what I want to know, as well as Dr. Hilton could tell me what I want to know, because you are full likelier to know what I want to know, than he is likely to know what I want to know.” Mr. Claverel set the camphor bottle on the table with such violence as to break it in a dozen pieces, and the lady continued, “It’s no use mourning over spilt milk, nor spilt camphor either, for that is a small thing to have done, compared to some things that have been done, if things have been done that people say have been done, and I suppose you know whether things have

been done as folks say they have been done, or whether they have'nt been done."

"What do folks say?" asked Mr. Claverel, quietly.

"Why, they say that a man has just come over from Medford, where Dick has been living all so fine, and they say he should have said that the *young Doctor* has run away with a school mistress, they say he should have said. But if he thought he abandinged my daughter, he was mistaken; for my daughter was divorced by the law two weeks come Saturday, and so he was the abandinged one."

Mr. Claverel did not purchase a new bottle, nor was he ever known to use camphor thereafter in any way, but always protested that cider vinegar was a great deal better.

To a lonesome little cabin on the banks of one of the Western rivers Richard Claverel took his fair, sad bride, for shortly after their flight they had learned its needlessness, and were married; but they were well aware that all the shame attaching to their first intention would cling to them still, and so were prevented from returning. The house they occupied was intended only as a temporary residence, until Richard should have time to look out a more desirable location in one of the many flourishing villages along the river bank. On this quest one day, he was overtaken by a sudden storm. No shelter was at hand, and, before reaching home, he became thoroughly drenched. The result was an attack of the prevalent disease of the country, chills and fever, which at length terminated in fever of the most malignant sort.

Very tenderly and patiently the young wife watched by his bedside, divining his unspoken wants, and ministering to them all. But with all she did, all she could do, his comforts were poor and scanty. How long and desolate the hours were, for no friend or neighbor came to give her advice or assistance, and at the close of the tenth day of his illness despair came down upon her heart. A dozen times that day a little bird had lighted in the window at the head of the bed, and trilled its merry song, and as often Caty had gone forth and frighted it away. She knew not why, but she felt a superstitious dread when she saw it, and wished it would not come.

All day the sick man had only spoken to ask for water ; but toward sunset he seemed to revive, complained of pain, and said the noise of the river disturbed him ; and then, wandering deliriously, he besought Caty to go out and make it still. Wishing to humor all his wishes, she affected to go, and sitting down in the door of her cabin, she watched the sun set, and wept alone. The sun sunk lower and lower and was gone, and the shadows deepened and deepened till the woods about the cabin were quite dark. The bird sung no longer ; but once Caty heard the beating of its wings against the pane, and groaned aloud.

The pale moon struggled up through the tree-tops, and the thousand lamps of the fire-flies shone along the banks of the gloomy river—the river that went moaning down the darkness in spite of the oft-repeated prayer of the dying man that it would be still.

“It is like a voice reproaching me,” he said, “for what I cannot help. Am I to blame for the evil star that has ruled my destiny ? Be still, Oh river, be still, and let me sleep !” But the river went moaning through the darkness all the same. The moon rose higher and higher through the window and across the floor, and over the hushed sleeper fell the still, cold light. The moaning of the river had ceased to trouble him.

THE SISTERS.

YEARS ago, there lived in a humble dwelling, a little way from Clovernook, two little girls, neither beautiful nor yet inordinately plain. They were sisters, loving each other with a love that was more than love; but they were not, as might be supposed, the only children of their parents. Not precisely alike in their disposition, though perhaps the better mated on that very account, they were never from their first years separated for a single day. In the woods and the orchards, on the hills, out in the meadows, and at school, they were still together. The name of the younger was Ellie, that of the elder, Rebecca. Ellie was gentle and sad, sad even in childhood, but years, and the weight of sorrow that fell from them, weighed down her heart, so that a calm but constant melancholy veiled the sunshine of her life. The calmness arose not so much from a clear perception of the great purposes God has about our wo, as from that worst round which humanity ever fills—apathy, indifference to the chill and the warmth, the flower and the frost. But let me not anticipate. Rebecca had a less dreamy and poetic temperament, more firmness and strength of character, more cheerfulness and elasticity of disposition, so that the younger wound herself about her as a vine winds round a young and vigorous bole, or rested by her side as a daisy rests in the shadow of a broad tree.

A thousand times have I seen them, long ago, their arms about each other, and their dark, heavy locks blown together by the wind. I remember a hill, half-covered with maples, where often in the summer times they sat, one with knitting or sewing—and this one was usually Ellie—and the other with a

book, from which she read aloud, for she was fond of reading, and as soon as she could read at all, read well. Sometimes, indeed, she put aside her book and related long stories to her admiring and wondering sister, who as yet had learned to give no utterance to her mused thought. Sometimes her dark eyes filled with tears, as she heard these, to her, beautiful relations; and she would say, mournfully, but half reproachfully, "I shall never do any thing half so well as you." Then the elder would move away the tresses from the forehead of the younger, and, kissing her many times, say, "Dear Ellie, you will be a poet;" and so would coax her to read the verses she had written yester eve, or the last Sabbath. Creditable they were, no doubt, but love and an unschooled judgment exaggerated their merits; still, pleased, each with herself and the other, they toward sunset crossed the homeward meadows, as if they came in inspiration from the holiest mount of song. The home in which they lived was a little brown cottage, with no poetic surroundings, save the apple tree, that in wintertime creaked against the wall, and in summer blossomed and bore fruit against the windows, with some rose bushes that grew by the garden fence, and climbed through it and over it as they would. The chamber in which the sisters slept was low, and there was no ceiling beneath the roof, so, often they lay awake listening to the fall of the rain—that beautiful music—they built castles in the clouds, and peopled them with the airy beings of their imagination. Stately chambers they built with pictured walls and elaborate ceilings, through which the patter of the rain, the unknown inspiration of their dreams, could not be heard. The days came soon enough, at least for one, when the light of setting suns was all the light she knew.

They were strange children, unlike any others I ever met, wonderfully gifted, sensitive exceedingly, but of rustic parentage, and almost totally uneducated. They began very early to be dissatisfied, and to think that beyond their little world there was one full of sunshine and pleasure. They read eagerly all the books, of whatever nature they could seize upon; went apart from the others in the family, for there were children older and younger; and talked and dreamed.

True, they were required to work when they were not at the school; but when the tasks of the morning were done, with sewing or knitting they went to the meadows or the orchard. Often have I seen them in a field of sweet clover sitting in the shade of a beautiful maple, just on the slope of a hill, washed at the base by a runnel of silvery water, along which grew a thick hedge of willows that hung their long, green branches almost to the stream's surface. All the valley was full of dandelions, now brightening out of slender stems, and now falling and drifting lightly away, as the grass perished, and the flowers of the grass. There were also many other flowers, little delicate wild flowers, some of them beautiful, and some of them very plain, as are children; but their names I do not even know, for I learned not the science, but only the beautiful worship of Flora, and pure worship has never much to do with names. Cattle grazed here and there, or lay in the cool umbrage of other trees; and sheep and lambs skipped over the hills, all making a quiet and lovely picture.

This favorite haunt looked, on one side, toward the willow valley; beyond which, dark and thick, stretched a long line of woods; and on the other, toward the road, on the opposite side of which, under clusters of locust and cedar, gleamed the white stones of the graveyard I have mentioned sometimes, and the cottage where died Mary Wildermings.

"If you live longer than I, dear Ellie," said Rebecca, one day, after they had been a long time silent, "don't let them bury me there."

Tears came to the eyes of the young girl, and putting her arms around the neck of her sister, she said, "What makes you talk so? You will never die."

"Why not I?"

"Because I love you," said Ellie, "and no one I ever loved is dead."

It was a sad smile which came over the face of Rebecca and lighted up her dark eyes, as she answered, "You will part away the thick boughs in yonder burial ground before long, Ellie, for I am sure they will lay me there, and you will read on a plain little headstone,—*Rebecca Hadly, fifteen years*—and a few

months and days, I don't know precisely how many; but I shall die before I am sixteen. It will not be long," she continued, as if thinking aloud, "I shall be fifteen in a few months."

"Do not talk so any more," said Ellie, half crying, "let us go home, and I will give you my new apron that mother made for me." Rebecca did not rise, but with her hands folded together in her lap, and her eyes cast down, continued to sit on the grass in silence; while Ellie, picking the wild flowers around her, made wreaths which she hung about her neck, and twined among her hair, prattling of a thousand things in order to make her sister forget that there was such a thing in the world as death. But the effort to forget kept the evil in remembrance, and like a dark cloud, it lay before her whichever way she turned.

That day passed, and another, and another, and though the sisters never talked of death any more, there lay thereafter on the hearts of both an oppression—the consciousness of thinking often of what the lips must not speak.

In going to and returning from school, they always passed the little graveyard, when Ellie never failed to hurry by her sister, and to talk with more life and energy than was her custom. The cheek of Rebecca was the fullest and reddest, her step the most elastic, and her spirit the most buoyant generally, yet, at times, there came over her an impenetrable gloom—happily the prophetic assurance of ultimate destiny. Under the subdued and more habitually melancholy temperament of Ellie, lay a substratum of energy that no one ever suspected—that, for years, she never suspected herself.

One evening as they were returning from school—their long shadows stretching clear across the road—returning slowly, and talking of the schoolmaster, they were unexpectedly interrupted.

Troop after troop of noisy little urchins passed them by, tossing dinner baskets in the air, shuffling up the dust and getting each other's "tag," for they were in high glee—school had been dismissed an hour later than usual, and each one felt himself the bearer of a most important dispatch. Flushed and excited were they as they hurried past each other, eager to communi-

cate at home what they supposed would tell awfully against the master.

“A pretty teacher,” said Bill Martin, a rough, bullying boy, “I’d just like to have him keep us in this late again, and I’d show him!” With this exclamation he shook his stout fist in the air, as though in the face of a mortal enemy, and on bringing it down, turned it suddenly at a sharp angle, knocking off the hat of a quiet little boy of half his years—which feat being performed, he ran forward, raising, as he did so, a cloud of dust that prevented the frightened child from seeing in what direction the hat was gone. He began to cry, on which Bill stopped and called out, “That’s a good fellow! cry on, and go home without your hat if you are a mind to, and when you get there your father will whip you for losing it, and then you will have something to cry for.” This speech failing to produce the soothing effect he seemed to have expected, he ran to one side of the road, and climbing to the topmost rail of the fence, raised himself on tip-toe, and appearing to look far across the fields, said, “Yes, I told you so, your father has heard you already, and I see him cutting a switch from the peach tree; now he is looking to see if it’s a strong one; now he has put up his jack-knife, and now he is coming this way as fast as he can come—you had better be still, cry-baby, or he will beat you to death.” Having finished this salutary admonition, he jumped from the fence completely over the head of a little girl, who stood listening near, and called out, “Boys, it’s pitch dark in the woods! who is with me to go back and give the old master a fight: I wish he would just dare to keep us in this way again!”

Now the schoolmaster was not an old one by any means, but, on the contrary, quite young—certainly not more than five and twenty. Poor fellow! the children of his charge were, though sensible enough, rude and undisciplined, scarce half civilized, as it were, and little inclined to be studious. Their slow advances were all, by them, and too often by their parents, attributed to the inefficiency of the master. The general feeling against him had, on the evening referred to, broken out with uncommon vehemence, and promised, as most of the pupils hoped, his speedy ejection.

"Let us walk slow," said one, "and make it late as we can, for it's as late as it can be any how."

"I had cyphered away beyond where I am now long ago," said another; "I don't believe he knows how to cypher himself, and that's the reason he puts me back all the time."

Thus the majority talked—outraged that the school had been dismissed a little later than usual—a result, in part, of their own neglected lessons—but they expected wisdom to flow into their understandings without any effort of their own, and if it did not, the teacher was of course a blockhead.

Far behind the rest walked Rebecca and Ellie, talking of the master, too, but in a different vein. They seemed to loiter, for they had gone aside to recover the little boy's hat, blown by the wind into the middle of a stubble field. Then, too, they were conversing more earnestly than usual, and so quite forgot that it was late.

"I am sure he is sick," said Ellie, "and not to blame for keeping us a little late; he could not attend to the lessons, I know, he looked so pale, and kept coughing all the time."

"The first day I came, I thought he was so ugly," she continued; "didn't you, Rebecca?"

"Ugly! no, to my thinking, he was always handsome, and his voice is music."

Ellie laughed outright, and Rebecca, blushing at her own enthusiasm, said, half angrily, "what do you laugh at? because I don't think the schoolmaster as ugly as you do?"

"Oh, don't be vexed; I didn't laugh at anything, and sometimes in afternoons, when his cheeks grow red, I think him almost beautiful. To-day, when he was reading in the Bible before dismissing school, he looked so, and, Rebecca, he thinks you pretty, too."

"No, Ellie, you are mistaken; no one thinks me pretty, nor am I."

Mournfully as this was said, a smile came over her face which *did* make her really beautiful, as Ellie continued, "I saw him writing poetry to-day, and under pretence of asking some question, I went close to the desk to see what it was, and

though I could not see that, I *did* see written over it, 'To Rebecca.'"

"There are a great many Rebeccas in the world," said the elder sister, "and his poem, if he were really writing a poem, was probably to some friend."

"Probably it was, for you are his friend."

"Well, Ellie, if you will have it so, I shall make him the hero of a story, such as I tell you, and read it on the last day, but what did he say to you after he spoke of putting you in French, to-day?"

"Nothing, I guess; let me see—Oh, he asked me how old I was, and then he said, 'Rebecca is two years older, yes, you must study French'—that was all he said."

"I wish, Ellie," said Rebecca, after they had walked a little way in silence, "I wish we had shoes to wear to school."

"Oh, what a beautiful dog!" exclaimed Ellie, as one of the finest of his tribe passed her; "I wish he were mine."

"Do you really think him beautiful?" asked a voice close at hand—not rudely, but with singular affability and sweetness. It was one of those voices which one instinctively recognises as belonging to a person of cultivated mind and manner; for in the voice there is, to my thinking, as much indication of character as in the countenance.

The face of the young girl blushed crimson—she had never before found herself in such immediate contact with one so evidently her superior, in position and education, and it was not without hesitation and almost painful embarrassment that she replied, "Yes, sir, I think him very pretty."

Probably seeing her confusion, the gentleman did his best to make amends, continuing to converse in an easy way of such things as he naturally supposed her to be most familiar with—the neighborhood, the characters of the people, the productive qualities of the land, and so on. Poor Ellie, she felt that she stammered—appeared awkward—and this consciousness only heightened her native rusticity. She could not say what she knew half so well as to any one in whose eyes the effect she produced was indifferent to her. She wished, much as she wanted him to perceive that she knew more than she seemed

to know, that he would walk on, talk to Rebecca, do anything, in short, but walk slowly and talk to her.

The elder sister had taken no part in the conversation; no question had been especially addressed to her, and her thoughts not being such as she could give expression to, she did not care to talk at all.

When, however, the stranger said, "Your teacher—what is his name? for you have been to school, as I guess," she looked up with interest, and as Ellie hesitated, as though that were a question demanding a reply from her, she did reply, and the stranger continued interrogatively,

"And still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew!"

Rebecca made no answer. The gentleman had made no favorable impression on her mind, and it was all in vain that he added, "I shall be happy to make his acquaintance."

There was perhaps a little sarcasm in the tone, as Rebecca said, "And *he* cannot be otherwise than happy." Whether there was or not, the stranger evidently thought so, for he turned to Ellie, and reverting to their previous conversation, said, "I am glad, my little friend, to hear so good an account of the people and the country hereabout, inasmuch as I think of pitching my tent under some of these hills, and an acquaintance so informally begun, on my part, will, I hope, result in our friendship. *We* shall be amiable neighbors, I am sure," he added, rather to Ellie, who, unaccustomed to such civilities, could think of nothing to say in reply, but looking across the field, as though suddenly absorbed in the beauties of the landscape, she scarcely saw the polite inclination, or heard the "Good evening, young ladies," with which, the gentleman, mending his pace, was soon too far away to hear them.

"I wonder," said Rebecca, at last, for neither of the sisters spoke for some time, "I wonder if tea will be ready?"

"I don't know," answered Ellie, adding presently, "how much I wish we had shoes."

THE REMORSE OF WILLIAM MARTIN.

THE light of the long blue summer twinkled along the hills ; the trees, in full leaf, had lost the first freshness and gloss of spring ; heats held the drowsy winds in leash ; the birds sang less and less gaily, and clouds of yellow butterflies hovered over the beds of streams that had gathered their lengths of silver waves into dull stagnant pools. The reaping was done, and the broad blades of the corn-fields rustled together now and then, indicating the ripe ears and coming frosts. Autumn yet hesitated on the borders of beauty for the blackening of the flower-stalks, to twist in with his crown of golden-stemmed wheat, left long ago, by the gleaners, shining along the stubble-fields. Among the apple-boughs, the light silvery net of the spider hung all day unbroken. It was the still hazy time preceding that "when the dull rain begins at shut of eve."

The school had gone on, with the interruption of a day occasionally, when the master was less well than usual, till within two weeks of its close. "Just let him dare to show himself again," Bill Martin never failed to say, when such holidays recurred, "and I'll twist him round my little finger." And the whole school heaped execrations on the head of the unfortunate young man, who, hopeless and friendless, struggled and labored on, "sick for home." A great deal of unnecessary pain and vexation his pupils gave him, for the strong are apt to despise the weak ; sometimes they hid away his favorite books, so that at noon the solace they might have afforded, as he lay in the shade, thinking and coughing, was denied him ; sometimes they slyly clipped a button from his threadbare coat, on which occasions the mirth became irrepressible ; and sometimes they pur-

posely upset his dinner basket—emptying the contents on the dusty floor. There was no end to their mischievous and sometimes cruel practices upon his weakness and apathy.

“I hope you are very well to-day,” said Ellie Hadly one morning, as she presented him a sweet little bouquet of wild flowers, gathered on her way to school.

The feelings of the earth are not easily overcome, and he answered, smiling gaily, “I do feel well, just now—very well,” and then he added, as he turned them round and round in admiration, “Did you gather them all, Ellie?” Had he glanced at Rebecca, there could have been no need of other reply; she was intent on the morning lesson, but her cheek, I fancy, was not so crimsoned by any thing she read.

That day, life, as it were, sent its ebbing currents back; he talked of the next session, the next year; how much his pupils would have learned by such and such a time, and how proud he should be of them; told them of the little presents he had prepared for them the last day of the term; all, he said, would merit them, he was sure.

“Then,” said Rebecca, timidly raising her eyes to his, “you will not go back to your home on the mountain?” “Such had been my intention,” he said, “if I grew worse—but I shall not—with the cool airs I shall grow stronger.” A cough interrupted him, and he added, “Perhaps I shall go back;” and after a pause, “and if I do, you will get a better teacher than I have been, I hope, but you will not get one that will like you better, for,” he said, “you are all very dear to me.” “And I am sure we all love you,” said Ellie, “don’t we, Rebecca?” But Rebecca asked something about the grammar lesson, and did not reply to the question at all.

The school-house was a little wooden building, unsheltered with trees, standing right against the road-side. Many trees had been planted; none of them, however, were for any length of time suffered to grow, and Bill Martin was accused of knowing more of the causes of their death than he cared to say. At the beginning of the present session the poor teacher, unequal to so hard a task, had one enervating day labored hard to plant some thrifty locusts and maples before the windows, but

they never came into leaf, and were soon quite withered and dead. "I think," said the master afterward, as he saw Bill Martin cutting into one of the trunks to see if it were quite dead, "I think this soil is not adapted to the growth of trees." "No, sir," said Bill, with ill-suppressed laughter, "no tree whatsoever could grow here." So saying, he ran away to tell the other boys that their teacher was a bigger fool than he thought he was.

A little way from the school-house, and on the opposite side of the road, was a pleasant beech grove, where the boys played bass ball, and where the girls carried disused benches and see-sawed over fallen logs. Here, too, the master spent the noon times with his books. The day on which he had promised the presents, he took his book, as usual, and sought a favorite retreat under the low-drooping boughs of an elm, and as he half-reclined, he arranged between the leaves of his volume the flowers which Ellie had given him. Dreams, vague and unshapen, but of a soothing nature, trembled about his heart as did the shadows upon the grass. "These flowers," he thought, "withered away from their stalks in the chilly airs last year—all winter the bleak snows were over them—and the winds moaned about their graves; but the spring came back, and the stocks shot up fresh and green, and hung their buds and flowers, pale and gold and red, in the bright sunshine. So perhaps the sap of my nature has flowed into my heart, as the juice of the plant to the root, and one shower of the tears of sympathy, one fall of the sunshine of smiles, might roll it back again, and I grow strong and well. If I should—and I am sure I shall: I feel stronger to-day than for months." So thinking, he arose and essayed a trial of his powers on a green bole, standing close at hand. It was not thicker than his wrist at the root, much less toward the top, and catching at the boughs he drew it down a little, but with all his efforts he could not bend it to his will. "Let me help you," said Bill Martin, rushing forward—like a withe it bent before him, but he suddenly and purposely loosed his hold, and the rebound was right in the face of the master. He staggered back a little, put his hands to his face, and then sunk on the grass, the blood trickling through his thin white fingers.

"Are you hurt—are you hurt?" exclaimed the boy, now really, and for the first time in his life, terribly frightened: "I didn't mean to do it; I didn't mean to do it;" and he repeated this over and over, as some excuse to his conscience.

"Oh, William," answered the teacher at last, looking at the boy, or trying to look at him, "I cannot see any thing—I am blind; but never mind," he added, very sorrowfully, and knowing by the boy's interjections and sobs how much he was alarmed, "Never mind, I could not have seen much longer at any rate. Give me your hand and lead me to the school-house;" but the boy could not look on what he had done, and ran hastily away. Presently he stopped, and pulled up some grass, which he fed to a drove of starving pigs that he had pelted a thousand times; then, seeing a cow standing in the sunshine, with a board before her eyes, which he himself had tied there an hour before, he ran to her, and taking it off, dashed it against a stone, and split it to fragments.

"What is the matter, William?" Rebecca Hadly said, as she returned slowly, and with an open book before her, toward the school-house, for the occupation was an extraordinary one for him, and she saw, too, his agitation, and the traces of recent tears.

"There is nothing the matter with me!" and taking his slate-pencil from his pocket, he began scratching straight marks on the fence: "but the school-master is sick—I expect may be he is—I don't know."

"What makes you think he is sick?"

"I don't know," said the boy, scarce intelligibly, "I don't know as it's him, but somebody lies under a tree down here in the woods, and I expect he is sick. I don't know as it's the master; and I don't know as he is sick."

The girl closed her book and walked fast in the direction which he indicated, having urged him in vain to go with her. He prest his face against the fence-rails a moment, gazing after the girl, and then turning away, sat down by the road side, taking up his hands full of dust, sifting it from one to another, and wondering whether, if a boy accidentally makes a man blind, they would take him up and put him in jail.

"Oh, master!" exclaimed Rebecca as, drawing near, she saw his awful plight, "what is the matter? and how did it chance? Dear, dear master, you are badly hurt!" and stooping over him, she pushed back his disordered hair, and wiped his face with her handkerchief. "Rebecca, dear Rebecca," he said at last, and putting his arm about her, he drew her to his side; and half-shrinking from him, she suffered his last and first embrace.

Thoughts and feelings long in the hearts of both, unuttered but comprehended, thus sadly found a voice. An hour before, and they could not have spoken one tithe of what they now said very calmly. The flowers of their hope were cold gray ashes now, and the crimson that would have sprung to their cheeks was beaten down with tears. How the breath of affliction sweeps away the barriers that divided us, and bears us full into the arms of love!

Now that the light was folded away, as a mantle, and the outer vision darkened for ever, the inner seemed correspondingly quickened; and the truth, felt vaguely before, was clearly perceived. As we sometimes feel the working of the mole beneath our feet, the young man sorrowful, but resigned, felt the turning of the furrows of death. He had, perhaps, after the first passionate burst of half-rebellious sorrow was hushed, never been so happy as now. As the sun grows large and bright among the sunset clouds, so his soul, in calmness and trustfulness of faith, grew large among the shadows of death.

"Life has been a weary journey to me," he said, "for I walked alone, and with no sweet human hope to beckon me forward; the way was long and rough, but now that I have met you, Rebecca, though your soft hand is only in time to open for me the door of death, I am ready and glad to go in."

Rebecca was almost a child, but her heart had outgrown her years; she knew that the gay blossoms of life must sooner or later whiten in the frost; and when it fell, though heavier and earlier than she expected, she loosened her arms away from her idol, and took beneath them the cross. It is hard to see gathered the shock of corn fully ripe; but when the green stalk that might have borne much fruit is cut down, how sadly we strike hands with the reaper.

The school-house with the withered trees before it had been shut for ten days; very lonesome it looked, with no eager faces peering out at the windows, even when the coach with its four gray horses rattled by. "Is Billy at home?" said the voice of a strange young man, reining in his horse, which he rode without any saddle, at the gate of Mr. Martin. Billy was in the garden gathering some dead pea vines; and hearing the inquiry, he crouched trembling and silent beneath them, for he verily believed he was to be arrested. To his further consternation, Mrs. Martin, who was shaking the crumbs from the table-cloth at the door, answered "Yes, sir, he is at home;" and folding the cloth, as she looked east and west, she called in a voice that wakened the distant echoes, "Bill-ee, Bill-ee, Billy Martin," all in vain. Then she walked slowly toward the man, and Billy heard them say something which he could not understand, but he was sure he caught the word school-master. I need not attempt to describe his sufferings; it was long after night, when he ventured to creep out and steal toward the house; he listened at the door, but all was still; "Perhaps," he thought, "they are waiting for me, and if I go in, they will catch me and tie me up with a rope." Then he crept back again into the dark. Finally he came once more, and putting his hand through a broken pane in the window, drew the curtain softly aside. There sat his mother, rocking the cradle with one foot and finishing a pair of new blue trowsers for him. Could they be to wear to prison?—surely not. Perhaps his father was going to take him to Mr. Smith's vendue, for Mr. Smith was going to sell his ploughs and harrows and fanning-mill and sheep; together with six milch cows, and all his household furniture, and move to Wisconsin. How he wished he was going with him. If he could only go to the vendue—and what else were the blue trowsers for—he would ask Mr. Smith to take him, and when he got there, he would call himself William Smith, and nobody would ever know how he hurt the school-master.

At this happy thought he boldly, and at once, opened the door. His mother asked him where he had been, and on his replying, "Just in the garden pulling up the pea vines," quietly

resumed her work. He did not dare to ask what he so much wished to know; but sitting down on the floor with his eyes wide open, watched the progress of the blue trowsers. Whenever his mother told him it was time little boys were in bed, he replied that, "He didn't see why he couldn't get sleepy to-night."

At last he said, fearfully, "Is father going to the vendue to-morrow?" His mother answered, querulously that, "She did not know," adding as it were to herself, "I should like to know how the feather beds will go; but when all is said and done, I expect I shall never have a spare bed;" and, sighing, she folded up the blue trowsers.

"Come, come," said she, looking sternly at Billy, whose eyes were still wide open, "it's high time little boys were in bed;" and taking him by the ear, she led him the length of her arm toward the door of his chamber. Poor boy! it was a long time before he slept. The next morning as he sat on the wood-pile intently watching the movements of his father, to see if he were likely to go to the vendue, his mother, with a towel pinned around her waist by way of apron, came to the door and called him in. His blue trowsers, finished now, together with his best shirt, were hanging over a chair before the fire, and his mother, pointing to them, said, "Now go and wash your face and hands as clean as ever you can, and then come and put on these." He hastened to obey; but his hopes fell when he heard her say, "Bad boy, you don't deserve to have new clothes." He did not know whether this implied a general rebuke for the whole tenor of his life, or whether she had especial reference to his last crowning sin. The fear of being sent to prison came back upon him; and with sad misgivings, he did as he was bidden. When he was drest, he was obliged to wait and wipe away the tears more than once, before going back into the presence of his mother; nor was he much relieved when she told him to put on his hat and go and see the school-master. "What for?" he inquired, sinking into a seat. "I don't know what for—because I tell you to—and because he took the pains to send for you, you naughty boy, you; you don't deserve to go." In vain the boy said he did not want

to go; he was told he might go or take a whipping; and after hanging back for a time, he set out at a snail's pace.

It was a lonesome old farm-house, with a broad meadow and a strip of woods between it and the public road, where the master's lodgings were. An old horse-mill stood near it, where such of the neighbors as did not go to uncle Hillhouse's mill, for the distance of several miles around, had their meal and flour made; and its dull, homesick rumble was never still. The yard about the house was enclosed with a strong post and rail fence, to which, when Master William Martin came in sight, some three or four horses were attached. A woman, tall and dark, with black sunken eyes, over which drooped purple lids, with brown hair, streaked with gray, combed straight back from her forehead, and a thin, care-worn face, was standing on a stone pavement near the door, churning. "Come in, little boy," she said, "come in—he won't hurt you!" as the gate creaked on its hinges, and, looking up, she saw him hesitating, afraid of the great watch-dog that, couchant half-way between the door and the gate, raised himself on his forepaws, growling furiously.

She stopped her work for a moment, and raising the "dasher" looked at it intently to see if the butter were likely to "come," and then with an expression half weariness and irritation, half kindness and sorrow, showed him through a wide, dark hall, the floor of which was partly covered with some strips of coarse carpet, and up a steep stair, the steps of ash wood, and scoured exceedingly white. At the first landing, she paused, and said to the trembling visitor, in a whisper, "He's dreadfully changed; I don't expect you would know him hardly, he has suffered every thing amost;" she then added, "the doctor put great blisters on his arms and the back of his neck about midnight, though it appeared like he didn't want it done, for he kept saying all the while, 'Oh, it will do no good.'" She softly pushed open the door, and going up to the bedside, took the limber white hand from off the coverlid in her own, and said in an encouraging and cheerful tone, "Here is a little boy come to see you."

"I want water, give me just a little," said the sick man.

"No, the doctor says you must not have it; when you get well, I will bring you a big pitcher full, right out of the spring—that great big white pitcher with the purple roses on it, and you may have just as much as you want."

"Can I not have it now, or in an hour?" he asked, beseechingly; but the woman was back at her churning.

He suppressed the moan that rose to his lips, and taking from an earthen pot covered with a saucer, which stood on a table within reach, a drink of herb tea, resumed the smile of patient quiet habitual to him. The room was large, with a low ceiling, scantily furnished with two or three unpainted chairs, a breakfast table from which one leaf was broken, a walnut bureau and a small looking-glass in a frame of carved oak. Beneath this hung the only ornaments of the room, the pale checky skin of a snake, a wand of bright feathers, and a pin-cushion, made of deep yellow silk, and to represent an orange.

The paper curtains, on which brown ships and green trees were intermingled, were down over the windows, making a kind of twilight in the room. The window near the head of the bed was a little open, but a sickening smell of medicine pervaded the atmosphere, and vials and papers were strewed over the mantel.

The schoolmaster had requested that his pupils might all come and see him, and most of them were there before Bill. Half afraid and still, they sat or stood about the room, but as far from the bed-side as they well could. Only Ellie, leaning over the pillow, took the long damp locks in her hands, and wiped the perspiration from the brow, sadly, silently—she began to fear that one she loved could die.

A little bird, beating its wings for a moment against the pane, flew into the room, and the children, diverted from their fear, began to try to catch it, talking and laughing out as they did so. At the familiar sounds, a smile came over the master's face, but faded off as he said, "There is one voice I do not hear." Ellie understood him and said, "She will come to-night." "To-night, Ellie," he said, repeating her words, "to-night—there will never be any more morning for me."

Presently he asked to be raised on his pillows, and removing

the shade from his eyes, for he could see a little, took a parcel from the table, untied it, and displayed a great many little volumes, in bright binding and with gilt edges. Calling the children around him, he said, "These, my little friends, are for you; I shall never teach you any more, for I am going a long, lonesome journey, but they will make you wise beyond my poor human wisdom. You have all loved me, and I am sorry to go away and leave you," and, one by one, he laid his thin hand upon their heads, and asked God's blessing to come down and brighten his own. Very brightly the sun shone without. A bridal train swept along the distant road, and was gone, the woman, weary and worn, sat down in the shadow to rest, and in the dark chamber the children sobbed their farewells.

The shining arrows of sunset were lodging among the boughs of the eastern wood; the weary laborer plodded home; the cattle gathered about sheds and stackyards; and the busy housewife plied her evening care. One sound—the rumble of the mill—was over all.

Under the open window of his dark chamber, through which the chill air came and went, there knelt a young but heavy-hearted girl, her fallen hair swept against the face, and her lips touched the lips of the dead. Knocking at the gateway of peace, eager for the waters of life, there was another soul.

MRS. GREY'S TWO VISITS.

WHEN we look abroad in the world, there seems no ebbing in the great wave of humanity ; and while our own hearth-light falls on no pale cheek and no tear-dimmed eye ; while the little circle, of which we are a part, is unbroken ; while the music, sounding from heart to heart, has never been muffled by the shroud-folds, it is not possible to conceive the aching and the longing that come upon the soul when an accustomed smile has darkened away, and how one little mound may throw a shadow over the whole wide world. If there be any sorrow for which the oil of gladness holds no chrism of healing—sorrow, making life a blank and eternity unsubstantial, it is that which comes over us when, for the first time in our lives, we lay back the winding-sheet, and give our kisses, wild and passionate, to the pale, unanswering dust. God over all, blessed forever ! put the arms of Thy loving kindness about the many children of affliction, leaning away from the sunshine to the cold comfort of the grave.

The winter, with its chill winds and leafless trees, shining icicles and capricious sunshine, was gone ; the blue birds were building, and the lilacs budding through ; here and there, along the northern sides of the hills, and close under the shelter of the fence, there was a ridge of snow, hard and sleety ; and the young lambs, their fleeces just twisting into curl, skipped about their dams, and nibbled the tender grasses. The daffodils were all bright by the doors of the cottages, and the flags had sent up from the long dead grass their broad green blades ; while the housewives, their aprons full of seeds, made plans for the new beds in the garden.

Rebecca and Ellie were in the woods gathering wild flowers; the shutters of the school house were swung open; a new teacher had come. "Where are you going, Billy? come back with you; it's after school time now, and here you go with a spade over your shoulder, as tho' you meant to dig the world to pieces." Billy stopped, hung down his head a little, but said nothing; and Mrs. Martin continued, as though the total depravity of the child compelled her to say a few words more. "I do wonder if anybody ever had such a boy? I've tried, and I've tried, till I've got no patience left, to make you like other children, but it's all no use; and I'll have to tell your father, and let him take you in hand, and see if whipping will do any good. Didn't I tell you, as soon as you had eaten your breakfast, and fed the pigs, and gone over to Mr. Tompkins's, and taken home the butter-print, to go right straight to school; and here you are with a spade over your shoulder, and I don't suppose you know yourself what you want to do with it." Here she advanced to Billy, and taking him by the collar, gave him a hearty shake, saying, "Is this the way you expect to pay your father and me for all we have done for you? Pretty way, isn't it? I was going to let you go to town Saturday, and buy you a new straw hat; but now I guess you may stay at home and carry a spade about on your shoulder; for you don't deserve any new hat. Now go and feed the pigs, and then go over to Mr. Tompkins's and take home the print, and ask Mrs. Tompkins if she will exchange a setting of eggs with mother; and don't stay an hour—mind that."

Billy put down his spade and said that he had fed the pigs, and been to Mr. Tompkins's; and that he was then starting to school.

"Is it possible," said the woman; but so far from giving him any praise or encouragement, she added, "well, it's the first time in your life you ever did any thing right, and I expect it will be the last—go to school."

Billy gave one lingering look at the spade, and departed, thinking to himself, that if he ever grew big he would go away off to some strange country, where his mother would never hear of him any more.

Thus, moodily reflecting, he plodded slowly toward the school-house; he had not, however, proceeded far, when he was overtaken by a gentleman driving in a light carriage, and alone. He reined in his horse, a glossy, black, and beautiful animal, and said in a familiar, good natured way, "Won't you get in and ride, my little friend?" Billy was not used to being spoken to in so kind a tone; and the "Thank you" rose naturally to his lips, as he climbed in.

All the way the strange gentleman talked to him of a great many different things, drawing out what he had learned, and imparting knowledge, without seeming to do so, of other things of which he knew nothing, so that when the carriage stopped, and he got out in front of the school-house, he felt as though he were a boy of some importance. "I don't care," he thought, "whether the teacher is a good teacher or not, I shall go through the geography and arithmetic this quarter, at any rate, for the man said I could, and I can."

"Bright lad, naturally, but badly trained, badly trained—pity," cogitated the strange gentleman, as he drove on.

Rebecca and Ellie had gathered their laps full of flowers, and, by a mossy brookside, where the clear cold water trickled over the blue flagstones, sat down together—one braiding her flowers into wreaths, enraptured with their beauty, and light of heart—the other suffering hers to wither on the ground at her side, while, locking her hands over her knees, she gazed mutely and steadfastly into the stream; the little birds flitted among the boughs, only as yet fringed with verdure, filling all the woods with song and chirp and twitter; the oxen ploughed up and down the hills; and the bees flew hummily out from their hives. All day long they sat together there amid the sweet music of nature. Gradually the sad smile brightened on the lip of Rebecca, for Ellie did not cease her efforts to turn her thoughts into sunny and hopeful ways. The next week they were going to the city, where they had never been but once in their lives, so that it was of course regarded by them as a most important and interesting event. New dresses they were to have, and bonnets, besides some other things which I have forgotten, and they talked a great deal as to what styles and colors.

would be pretty and becoming, and then they talked of where they should go and what they should do in the new costume. The sun was burning among the western tree-tops, when they arose, and crossing a meadow where their way might be trailed through the green undulations of the grass, struck into the main road about the distance of half a mile from their home, and directly opposite the lonesome graveyard. Attracted by some sort of noise within it, they drew near, but their voices silenced the movements of the person, so that they began to think they had misapprehended what was perhaps after all but the stirring of the leaves, and were about turning away, when, leaning on his spade, and parting the thick briars through which he cautiously peered, they beheld the black eyes and pale face of Billy Martin. He was filling up the schoolmaster's grave. Ere they reached home, a carriage passed them, the same that had taken Billy to school in the morning, whence a gentleman, smiling recognition, gave the salutation of the evening. Ellie, almost trembling with confusion, dropt half her flowers, but Rebecca said calmly, "That is the same person that we saw coming from school," but her thoughts flowed back to the old time; but from the first moment of seeing him a deep interest had been created in the mind of the younger sister, and she continued musing as to who he was, and whether he lived in the neighborhood, until they reached the gate.

"Come, girls," said Mrs. Hadly, who was just coming from the smoke-house, with a plate of fresh-cut ham, "I want you to help me a little about supper." "Who is at our house?" inquired Ellie, in an eager tone, and coming close to her mother—for to have a visitor at tea was a great event.

Mrs. Hadly said it was Mrs. Grey, and added, "What will she think of you great girls, almost women, if she sees you with your hands full of playthings? Throw away your flowers, and go in and set the table." At this moment, the vision of a white muslin cap, profusely trimmed with black ribbon, appeared at the window, together with a little brown withered hand, checked with blue knotty veins, which flew briskly and vigorously up and down—for Mrs. Grey was an industrious woman, and never thought of sitting down, at home or abroad,

without some sort of work. She never forgot that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," and often repeated it, though her temperament was not at all poetical.

Mrs. Hadly, having got her supper "under way," left it to the care of the girls, and taking a pair of woollen socks, one of many that garnished a frame attached to the ceiling, she sat down close beside her neighbor, whose work, previously to commencing her own, she examined. It was a child's apron, made of bird's-eye diaper, and in a style which Mrs. Hadly had never seen, and holding it up admiringly, she said, "Now do tell me where you got this pretty pattern."

"Do you like it? I thought it would look pretty for a change, and the way I came by the pattern was this: The new folks that have moved into the old Graham place send over to our house a good deal for things. The very first night they got there they sent for a number of things. Mr. Hampsted didn't come himself, I suppose may be he was too proud, but I don't know as I ought to say that either—likely he had something to do at home—moving makes busy times, you know—at any rate, he sent a black man, with good sized basket, and I couldn't tell you what all he got! Let me see—in the first place he wanted to buy a loaf of bread—I *did* think that was queer, but I couldn't think of making any charge for that—then he got two pounds of butter, and a ham and a dozen eggs, and a quart of milk, and a few potatoes he got of Grey, I don't know just how many, but the strangest was, he put them right into a white Irish linen piller-case." And Mrs. Grey continued to say that they must be very extravagant people, for that the black man never asked the price of any thing till he got the passel in his basket, and that he then took out his puss, and paid her just what she asked, adding that for such trifling things as bread and milk she had no heart to charge any thing.

"I didn't know," said Mrs. Hadly, for both parties had quite forgotten the apron pattern, "that there were new folks in the Graham place."

"Is it possible? They have been there four or five days, and you not heard of it? Why, I saw Mr. Hampsted go along here not five minutes ago—you must have seen him, gals."

“The gentleman who just passed in the carriage, driving the black horse?” said Ellie, “I saw him—and he lives near by, it seems;” and though she scarcely knew why, Ellie was glad he did live near by.

“I expect, from all accounts,” continued Mrs. Grey, “they won’t have much to do with plain farmer folks like us, for Mrs. Hamstid, they say, keeps dressed up all the time reading books, and don’t even nuss her own baby. As I was coming here to-day I saw her in the garden, with a bonnet on nice enough to wear to meeting, and I noticed that her hands looked just like snow.” And Mrs. Grey finished with an “Ah, well! every one to their notion!” or seemed to finish so, but she presently added, “It looks strange to me to see three gals in one house—a chambermaid and nuss and cook, and they say they call them all sarvents; dear me, what will the world come to? I tell my man we shall have to make a vandue like Mr. Smith, and go off to a new country, there are so many town folks coming about with their man sarvents and maid sarvents, and fine carpets and furniture.”

Poor Mrs. Grey! she was an old-fashioned woman, and her preconceived notions would not readily yield to modern innovations. She sighed, and by way of diverting her mind, Mrs. Hadly said, “What did you say the name was?”

“I don’t know as I can make sartain,” said Mrs. Grey, “I understood the black man to call him Hampstead, and some call him Hampton, but for my part I guess the name is Hamstid.”

Rebecca went out and in, and up and down the stairs, busy about the table, and paying little attention to this conversation. She was thinking of the schoolmaster and of Billy Martin, who, stealthily hidden among the briers, was filling up his grave. But Ellie managed to hear all that was said in reference to the strange gentleman, secretly hoping to herself that when she should have her new dress and bonnet, she would meet him again; “for,” she thought, “if I look better I shall act better, and I do not want him to think me a simple rustic, as he does now; and how can he think any thing else?”

Meanwhile, Mrs. Grey finished her apron and folded it away,

quite forgetful of how she got the pattern ; and clapping her hands playfully together in the face of little Lucy Hadly—who having come in from her playhouse in the weeds, where she had been all day alone, paused a little way from the visitor, and crossing her hands meekly behind her, regarded her attentively, but not rudely—said, “Is this my little girl?” Lucy, not much accustomed to strangers, made no reply ; but with the long lashes dropping over her eyes, and a faint crimson breaking through her pale cheeks, stood silent.

“Can’t you speak,” said her mother, “and tell Mrs. Grey what your name is?”

“No,” said Mrs. Grey, “she can’t speak—the cat has got her tongue! Poor little girl, she hasn’t got any name.”

“I am quite ashamed of you, my child,” said Mrs. Hadly, smoothing away the golden locks which the wind had blown into tangles. Wiping the tears with her little brown hand, the child turned away ; her lips trembled, for she was sensitively alive to blame ; and Mrs. Grey kindly drew her towards her, patted her cheek, and said, “I told a story, didn’t I? for you have got a pretty name ; and the cat hasn’t got your tongue either.” Lucy said “No ;” and in proof showed her tongue to Mrs. Grey, who answered delightedly, “That’s a little lady : I knew it!” She then unrolled the apron, and exhibited it to Lucy, and then she tried it on by way of pleasing her, and the large melancholy eyes of the child sparkled with pleasure, as nestling against the bosom of the kindly woman, she regarded herself admiringly.

I called Mrs. Grey a kindly woman—such she was, though not always prudent ; and leaning toward Mrs. Hadly, she said, “Is Re——,” she called the rest of the name so low that Lucy could not hear it, and added, “still moping and melancholy about the”——. Here she called a name again, but so low, that Lucy could not hear it any more than before.

Mrs. Hadly smiled as she answered that a child’s grief was not likely to be very durable ; and though both the girls had loved their teacher very much, she believed, it was scarcely in the nature of things, that they should always mourn for him. Mrs. Hadly spoke sincerely, and according to the best of her

knowledge; so her talkative friend continued—"Then you didn't know how somebody went to see somebody after he was dead!"

"Yes, she had liberty to do so."

"And did you know, too, how somebody left a present for somebody, and in that present a letter that nobody ever saw?"

"Do you allude to the Bible—of which each of the pupils received a copy?"

"Yes, I believe it was; but each of the pupils didn't have a letter, did they?" said Mrs. Grey.

"A few words of admonition, and farewell—nothing more. I am sorry a different impression has gone abroad: it would grieve Rebecca to know it."

"Hush, hush!" said Mrs. Grey, "little folks have big ears, sometimes;" and addressing herself to Lucy, she said, "Run out, and show the girls what a pretty new apron you have got."

She then told Mrs. Hadly, that it was currently reported, that Rebecca and the schoolmaster were engaged to be married; that they were in the habit of meeting each other in the woods, by the school-house; and that Rebecca went to see him after he was dead, and wept and moaned at such a rate, that they heard her all over the house. Now, if all this had been true, there would have been no actual wrong in it; but not so thought Mrs. Hadly, viewing things, as she did, through the most severe and restricting media. Besides, the harmless liking of the young persons had, in the mouths of village gossips, been made to assume an exaggerated and distorted form. It is a fault which many old, and some middle-aged persons fall into, to regard all innocent amusements in the young as indiscreet, and all approach toward love between the sexes as absolutely sinful, forgetful that they themselves were ever young and giddy, as they term it, forgetful that they ever loved and married, in all probability, whom they chose. Into this error Mrs. Hadly had fallen; and she resolved, that so flagrant a violation of what she considered propriety should not go unpunished. She was a woman of energy and decision, of severe and strict morality, regarding the dreamy and poetic dispositions of her children as

great misfortunes; something worse in fact—something to be ashamed of. Little aid by encouragement did they receive from her in their juvenile efforts; indeed, she was scarcely aware of their existence. An uneducated, plain, practical woman, she had no idea of genius or its uses. More discreet than her neighbor, she said nothing of her convictions or determination, but for a week thereafter pondered them in her heart.

And now the elder portion of the family were at tea; the sun was gone down, the chickens to their roost, and Ellie and Rebecca to the cow yard, where, while filling their pails, they talked much more gaily than usual: a little of the new neighbors, a little of Mrs. Grey and her gossip, and a little of going to town, and their new dresses and bonnets. While thus engaged, Lucy, in her new apron, came timidly near, half proud, and half ashamed. "Whose little girl is this?" said Rebecca, pretending not to know her; "it's Mr. Johnson's little girl, I guess; yes it is. How do you do, little Sally Johnson?" Lucy laughed, saying, that her name was not Sally, but Lucy. "Oh yes; I see now," said Rebecca, reaching one arm toward her, "it's nobody but our Lucy with a new apron on."

"Won't you get me an apron like this when you go to town?" and she smoothed it with her hand, regarding it with unspeakable admiration.

Poor little girl! she never before had seen such an apron; never possessed one in her life; but she was pleased with a happy delusion, for Rebecca said she would get one, if mother would let her. Sorry enough was the child when it was time for Mrs. Grey to go home, and she must part with the apron.

A week went by, and not one word said Mrs. Hadly in reference to the information she had received, or of the odious light in which she regarded it. Her manner toward her children was always reserved and chilling; there were no little confidences; no playful words or actions ever between them; and though the children loved her, they stood in too much awe of her to communicate any of their hopes or fears, or joys or sorrows.

It was Saturday morning; a light green wagon, before which two plump and sleek sorrel horses were harnessed, stood by

the door of Mr. Hadly. Ellie and Rebecca were arrayed in their best calico gowns, and though they had no gloves, and could scarcely keep their feet in their outgrown and rundown shoes, they left their low chamber filled with echoes of laughter, as they descended and climbed into their places, nestling down in the clean fresh straw, with which it was partly filled. Half-sunken in clover, a little way off, and wet with dew, glistened the little white feet of Lucy, her eyes half full of sunshine and half of tears. Her brown little hands locked together behind her, a faint smile on her slightly parted lips, and her yellow hair, partially curled, falling and drifting about her neck and shoulders, she had just found courage to say, "Don't forget the apron, will you?" as Mr. Hadly, his benevolent countenance shadowed by his broad-rimmed hat, untied the reins from the bough of the cherry tree.

"Stop," said Mrs. Hadly, appearing at the door; "Rebecca is not going to town to-day." This she said in a calm low tone, and as though pronouncing a sentence from which there was no appeal. Rebecca felt it to be so, and without question or hesitancy, obeyed, getting out of the wagon.

"I will stay, too, mother," said Ellie, in a trembling voice.

"No, my child; go to town and get you a new dress and bonnet: Rebecca don't deserve any."

This was said in a tone of self-commiseration, and as though she acted under the force of some terrible duty, and not in accordance with her will. Mr. Hadly looked puzzled a moment, pushed his hand through his iron-gray hair, stepped into his place, and drove away, saying to Ellie, in a tone half sad, half peevish, "I wonder what made your mother take such a notion? what has your sister done that is so bad?" Lucy sank down in the grass where she was standing, and, plucking the long blades, plaited them listlessly together, the tears dropping silently into her lap. But Rebecca, calm and unquestioning, resumed her work-day dress and her accustomed labors. All the day her thoughts were colored with saddest memories. She had little appetite for dinner, and less for supper, but forebore to speak of the headache with which she suffered, performing every task which usually fell to herself and Ellie, alone.

Toward night, while she milked, she listened eagerly to the sound of every wagon, but one after another passed by, and it was not until the lilac by the door was full of twilight birds, that the sorrel horses were seen coming over the hill.

Scarcely had she and Ellie been parted for a day, but the time had seemed very long, and now that she so much felt the need of the words and the endearments of sympathy, it is no wonder she ran to the gate eagerly as she did. But Ellie was not there. Aunt Jane, who lived in three rooms, and did plain sewing, had prevailed on her to stay and have her new dress made and her bonnet trimmed a little in the fashion, and so return home when her father should come to market the next week.

The moon rose round and full, filling the little chamber with a flood of trembling golden light, checkered with the window-sash and dotted with the leaves of the cherry tree without. Lucy had sobbed herself to sleep in the arms of Rebecca, and every now and then a long stifled breath disturbed the silence that else closed round her.

Sometimes the sleepless girl pressed one hand against her head; sometimes she turned, restlessly; and at last, wearied out, adjusting her pillow to support her, she sat upright. Very calmly fell the moonlight in the chamber—very still was the world without; but neither her heart nor her head would be lulled. She thought of Ellie, alone, and far away as the distance that separated them seemed to her; she thought of the schoolmaster and his solitary grave; she thought of herself; and thought, and thought, and thought, till at last the birds fluttered twittering from the lilac, and the pink and crimson streaks went blushing up the whitening East, without her having slept.

The world is full of bruised and crushed hearts and desolate spirits; moans of sorrow creep vein-like through the sunshine, and underlie the laughter, however gay and loud; pillows of pain, and chambers where the soft step of sleep will not tread, are all over the world; since the serpent folds were among the flowers, there is no perpetual bloom; and since sin furrowed the world with grave-mounds, and the white wings of

the angels darkened away from the curse, there is no rest and no solace for us any more.

Orphaned as we are, we have need to be kind to each other—ready, with loving and helping hands and encouraging words, for the darkness and the silence are hard by where no sweet care can do us any good. We have constantly before us the beautiful example of Him who went about doing good, yet how blindly, how perversely we err! A few bitter drops may poison the fountain of life, and the current flow sluggish and heavy forever.

The week of Ellie's visit was over: her new bonnet was trimmed and her dress made in pretty style, and she was glad when she saw the sorrel horses and the green wagon with its straw cushion before her aunt's tidy chamber. Delightedly she ran to meet her father, and ask if all were well, but the smile with which he met her was sad, and his voice full of melancholy forebodings. Rebecca was very sick.

"Oh, father! is she very *sick*?" Ellie asked, in a tumult of fear.

Mr. Hadly tried to assume a more cheerful tone, and, turning away his face, said, "I hope she will be better to-night. Get ready, Ellie, and we will drive home as fast as we can, for she wants to see you, poor girl!" Tying on her new bonnet, but with no pleasure now, and with her dress folded to a neat parcel, she was soon in her place in the wagon. But Rebecca had no new dress nor bonnet, and her own long-coveted treasures were now worthless. All the way she tormented herself with reproaches. If she had staid at home, or if she had gone back!—true, she was blameless, but for that her sufferings were not the less acute. She was impatient to be at home, yet she dreaded to arrive there.

She saw some laborers cutting trees in the woods, and whistling as they did so, and felt wronged almost that they neither knew nor cared about her sorrow. Carriages of gaily dressed people, driving toward the city, passed them, and she looked on them reproachfully. It was noon when they reached the school-house. The shutters and the door were open, the new teacher in the old one's place, and the children playing

and shouting in the woods, the same as though none were sick and none were dead. Lucy was waiting at the gate. There were no tears in her large melancholy eyes, for she knew not what death was; but she was oppressed with a vague fear, and kept out of the house all the time. The horse and carriage of Mr. Harmsted stood in the yard, but all within seemed hushed—only Mrs. Grey was seen at the window sewing something that was very white.

Both Ellie and her father forbore to ask about Rebecca of Lucy, who, crossing her hands behind her, looked wonderingly at the new bonnet. Mr. Hadly began to unharness his horses, that, tired with the fast drive, neighed impatiently to be in the stable; and Ellie stood hesitating, her new dress in one hand, and her old bonnet in the other, when Mr. Harmsted, coming from the house silently, touched the hands of each, and then taking the reins from Mr. Hadly, told them, in a low sad voice to go in. The father, brushing the tears away with the back of his hand, but in silence, and the young girl weeping out aloud, obeyed. Mrs. Grey, putting down her sewing—a thin muslin cap—came forward to meet them, and relieving Ellie of the new dress and bonnet, said, “Will you go up and see her now?” and softly opening the door, they followed to her chamber. The light was partly darkened away, and on the narrow bed where she had dreamed so many bright dreams, lay Rebecca, dreaming now no more. Ellie kissed her white lips, but their calm smile brightened not for the pressure; folded her hands lovingly, but they fell back heavily and cold. Through the white gates of morning her spirit had gone where the night never falleth. In the graveyard opposite the old playground, is a simple head-stone, on which is graven—

REBECCA HADLY,

AGED FIFTEEN YEARS, SEVEN MONTHS, AND FIVE DAYS.

A RAINY DAY.

A SLOW and continuous rain had been falling all night and all day. Toward evening, the western clouds took a yellow tinge that showed where the sun was; but no beams struggled through. Dense and gray, in all the valleys, lay the mist, and it hung about the hills in detached patches, thinner and whiter, and among the trees crept lazily from bough to bough. Now and then a bird came from its covert of leaves, or other shelter, and perching on the topmost fence rail, fluttered its wings and pecked the loose feathers from its breast, and twittered feebly; but the rain still drizzling on, ruffled its plumage presently, and flying away discouraged, it grew still. The chickens, in little groups, huddled under the low-spreading cherry trees, or beneath the currant bushes, and with the spray glistening on their breasts, red and speckled and brown, stood with closed eyes, waiting for the night.

The autumn, unusually mild, was wearing to its close. There had been no sharp frosts to blacken the flower-stalks, and they stood about the garden with some dying and dead blossoms clinging to them yet, withering away like mummies. The gorgeous foliage, the chiefest glory of our western autumns, was this year fading and falling with none of its accustomed beauty, and the dark belt of forest, topped with the clouds, which half encloses the vicinity of Clovernook, looked dreary and sombre enough. Since the event described in our last chapter, years have come and gone; all over all the neighborhood cottages and villas have thickened, and the undulating meadows, till the horizon, dropping on their bosoms, cuts off the view, are full of heavy-fleeced sheep, broad-shouldered oxen,

and deep-uddered kine, and the land is ridged with furrows, and plenteous in milk and wool.

A half-dozen spires may now be seen from the house where Ellie was born, and where, within her memory, there was but one; and wealth and population have increased in the same degree; but the old homestead, where passed her childish years, with its hard experiences, is among the things that were. Thistles bloom among the hearthstones—the earth almost covers the beams where the porch used to be—the porch, where the blue morning-glories bloomed in summer, curtaining out the sunshine, and about which red hollihocks flaunted, and yellow sunflowers leaned down to the west. Where the garden was, a few apple and cherry trees remain, unpruned and neglected. The sweetbrier that clambered against the wall and even up to the eaves, with its notched leaves and pale and delicate roses, making all the house fragrant, is broken and matted together, half living and half dead. On the summit of the slope near by, stands a new dwelling, not fine nor stately, but decent and substantial, where the remnant of the Hadlys have their home—the remnant, for of the circle once so wide some are wanderers, some have left the world. Rebecca, young and beautiful, half a woman, half a child, sighed not nor looked earthward when the still angel saluted her, “where the brook and river meet,” and straightening with icy hands the rippled length of her dark tresses, took the flowers out, and bound them under the napkin. And Lucy—the gentle and loving Lucy—did not linger long. She never lived to know how full of sorrow the world is. When her ninth summer came round, her dark deep eyes lost their sunshine, and day by day she drooped, as if the dust were settling heavier and heavier in her golden hair, until the silent messenger took her in his arms. The spring rains fell, broadening and deepening the young blades of the wheat, and filling the green velvety troughs that lay along the meadows with soft warm floods; but with the lambs the gentle child came thither no more.

A little girl had once come from the city to see her who wore a white dress. Lucy was not a child of poverty, but she was a rustic, and her garments of a simple and homely fashion; and to

have one of white, that should look like that of the wealthy little visitor, was among her chief desires. Sometimes she ventured to give this wish expression, but was chilled into silence by the admonition that she "had better wish to be a better girl." When the white dress was put on, and fitted under her golden curls, and drawn down over her feet, she knew it not nor smiled that it was gained.

From all her cares and toils the mother has gone, too: the grass is growing high and warm about her headstone. She was a good woman—more severe in family discipline, perhaps, than was necessary, but rigid in the performance of what she deemed her duty, busy early and late, not for herself, but her children, and when the circle was narrowed of two, her heart was broken, her occupation was gone, and the restless fever of unsatisfied longing consumed her life—fever that would not be abated 'till the seraphs folded their white wings about her forehead, and cooled its burning.

Others have grown up into manhood and womanhood, and gone forth to create new interests and make new homes, and in the new house Ellie is now the oldest child. She is no longer young, though in the sober prime of womanhood. Young sisters have sprung up into girlhood, dear, very dear to her, but scarcely filling the places of those who are in the grave. The weight of early care has fallen on her, and a temperament naturally melancholy has become habitually sad, and discontented, and embittered. Her father is a good man, a kind man, but all his habits and thoughts and ideas reflect a past generation. No innovation, however much for the better, disturbs the tenor of his way, but the farming is done, and the dinner is eaten, and the dress is worn, all in the old-fashioned style. Ellie's gowns must be made as her mother's were, and last as long. Times have changed, but he sees not that the frugal habits of the pioneer past are unsuited to the opulent present.

The old slender furniture looked badly in the new house, and the naked floors required stouter hands than Ellie's to keep them white. But the idea of carpets or of new chairs was preposterous. Neither was it admissable that any of the household labor, even its drudgery, should be performed by a ser

vant. There was nothing to do, Mr. Hadly said, since spinning and weaving were done away with. Ellie had had but small educational advantages—less even than her younger sisters; but her intellectual endowments were naturally superior. She had read what chance and opportunity afforded, and had thought a great deal; yet, at twenty-five, she had only the reputation of being a smart sort of country girl. She was modest, diffident even, and had passed her life in the greatest retirement, for the wealthy and fashionable society of the neighborhood found no attractions in her, nor had she ever made any overtures for its recognition. The consciousness of being entitled to a more elevated position, induced some discontent at the circumstances by which she was ruled, and at last embittered her naturally amiable temper.

But let me return to the autumn and the rain.

Before the hearth of an old-fashioned and simply-furnished room—the broad hearth upon which the logs were blazing—two persons are seated. The elder is Ellie, with smooth brown hair, parted plainly over a Grecian forehead, shadowed with sorrow and care, but unwrinkled yet, and wearing a simple dress of chintz. She is sewing on a child's garment, and listening to "Marmion," from which Zoe, who sits near her, is reading. Zoe is pretty, prettier than her sister, and almost ten years younger. They are brunettes. Ellie is the taller and more graceful, Zoe the more round and ruby-complexioned, her face having the tint of newly-winnowed wheat over which falls the crimson sunset. Her hair in black heavy curls clusters over her shoulders, and her eyes, blacker still, sparkle with laughing light. In her dress there is more style than in that of her sister, and on her forehead there is no care, and her hands are occupied with no task.

"Beautiful! isn't it beautiful?" exclaimed Zoe, putting down the volume and turning to Ellie. "How I should like to read the novels, also!" and rising and going to the window she said, "If it were not raining, I should be tempted to go and borrow them: they would help us wile away the long evenings that are coming, and I am so tired of the old books we have!

But we can't step out of doors for two or three days. Just see how it's raining!"

"Perhaps the clouds may break away," said Ellie, who always spoke more hopefully than she felt: "it looks bright about the sunset; but if it were not raining I think you would scarcely venture out;" and a little less genially she added, "I don't know any one I should want to ask to lend me books." Zoe had opened the door, and looking forth earnestly into the rain, said nothing, and Ellie continued, "Do you, Zoe?"

"No, none whom I think of," said the young girl, her first ardent impulse checked and chilled.

Briskly down the hill comes a one-horse chaise, the ringing hoofs of the gay animal strike sharply on the newly-washed stone surface of the road, his breath curls whitening away from his nostrils, and his slim silky ears are bent forward, for he is nearing home; but the curtains are drawn closely down, so that the solitary inmate rides drily and comfortably. Ellie, who is sitting by the fire, busy with her thoughts and her sewing, hears not the rattling of the wheels, nor sees the smile that from under the curtains accompanies the familiar salutation, nor does she hear the voice saying, "Don't you envy me?" but she sees the kindled light in Zoe's face, and hears her light laughter as she answers, "Most certainly."

"Certainly what?" asks Ellie, dropping her work and looking up. "How chilly it is," says Zoe, closing the door; and coming forward she resumes her old seat, and explains that she was speaking to Mr. Harmstead, who was, as she supposes, just returning home from the city to his country seat, which, as the reader remembers, joined Mr. Hadly's farm. "What a pleasant, agreeable person he is," continued Zoe, half to herself and half to Ellie; "my chilled resolve is strengthened again—I will ask him for those books yet, one of these days."

"Humph!" said Ellie, looking musingly and sadly into the fire, and adding, after a moment, "I suppose he is to those whom he condescends to honor with his society."

"He can't honor us very well if we won't receive his civilities."

"I have never had occasion to slight the civilities either of

him or any one else," answered Ellie, half sadly, half bitterly, and her sewing falling in her lap, she sat gazing abstractedly into the fire.

Zoe tried a more cheerful vein for some time; now of household matters, now of what the neighbors were doing, and now of the new dress she proposed for herself. "I want it very gay," she said, "with a ground of either orange or red, spotted with black;" and smiling, self-satisfied, she looked at Ellie for some sanction of her taste.

Ellie smiled too, but such a smile! I cannot describe it; it was scorn, pity, and commiseration, all combined; but she remained provokingly silent.

"What do you look that way for?" asked Zoe, in childish and pouting anger.

"Don't I look to please you? I can't help it, Zoe, that I am not fair to look on; for myself, I have become nearly reconciled to my plainness, but I cannot expect you, who are so much younger and prettier, to consider me with equal indulgence for my defects—you must look the other way, my dear;" and she patted the cheek of her sister playfully, and smiled again; this time graciously as it were, and as though Zoe had actually regarded her in the light she had herself assumed, and as though she could afford to be regarded so.

Zoe did look the other way, and covering her face with her brown hands, tears silently forced a way through them; and so, as the fire began to make the light in the room uncertain, ghostly—for the patch of yellow western clouds had gone into blackness—the sisters sat before it, moody and uncomfortable.

Night fell gloomily enough; the wind, which had gone sobbing across hills and among the leaves that filled the woods with sodden masses and long faded furrows, only now and then through the day, veered about at sunset, and from the chill northeast swept in heavy and frequent gusts, rattling the windows of the parlor, and occasionally blowing the red flames down close against the blue hearth.

The crickets crept out from their snug, warm crevices, and from the ends of the blazing logs and the empty corners of the great fireplace sung in answer to the storm, the storm that fell

now in impetuous and drenching floods, and now pattered lightly against the pane, as the half moon, breaking away the clouds, pressed earthward her pale melancholy face, for presently the black squadrons marshalled and beat her back to the dark, and the rain descended again as though its fountains were all broken up. It was a lonesome, desolate night.

However dreary and dismal a long autumn rain may be in its effect on the heart, it is soothing and softening, especially during the night-time, and Zoe, who was petulant, but not really ill-tempered, began to feel sorrowful rather than angry. Putting the embers together, and drawing nearer to Ellie, she said, as though she had not been weeping, as though there were nothing to be vexed about, "Now, if we only had that book!"

"Yes, if we had it," said Ellie; and the sisters relapsed into silence—haply listening to the creaking of the elm-bough against the wall, haply to the whine of the spotted watch dog that crouched close against the doorsill and would not be driven thence by the storm.

"Such nights make me sad," Zoe said, breaking the silence, "I think more of the times when I was a child, and there were so many of us to gather about the fire at night, and our merriment would not let us hear the storm. How desolate it is in the graveyard to-night. I am half afraid to think of it—the cold wet leaves dropping on the still mounds, and the long white grass beaten away from the headstones. Oh, Ellie, I wish we did not have to die; we might be so happy here!"

"You will not think so when you are as old as I am," answered Ellie, smiling sadly, "they who are gone are done with care and suffering, and will not have to die any more. I think they are rather to be envied. What is this night of storms to them? And you, who are living, you who have youth and health and hope, are made mournful by it."

"If we had some stirring tale or poem, and I could read aloud, we should not hear the storm nor be lonely any more," and rising and going to the table, she rummaged through the meagre and ill-selected books, though she was well aware of the names and qualities of them all; and turning, empty-handed, away, she resumed her seat with a sigh, saying, "If

ever this rain is over, I will call and ask Mr. Harmstead to lend me something to read, for charity's sake, if for nothing else."

A low growl of the watch dog arrested the conversation, and it was followed by a heavy stamping on the broad flagstones before the kitchen door, and a loud rap.

Zoe, who ran, half in hope that something was about to occur which would relieve this ennui, and half in fear that some dread accident had befallen a traveller, perhaps a near friend, returned in a moment, her face aglow with pleasure, and bearing in one hand a neat parcel and a small note, the edges of which glittered as she turned it to the blaze to read the address—saying, as she did so, "You see fortune favors me; I believe even hoping for the best has influence to bring it; Mr. Harmstead has anticipated my wishes, I think, for it was his black boy, Cæsar, who brought the package, which seems to be books, and this note"—and lighting the lamp, she threw the note into Ellie's lap to read, adding, gaily, "I can't read any thing but a schoolmaster's hand, you know."

Unfolding the paper, Ellie read:

"Mr. Willard C. Harmstead begs leave to present his compliments to the Misses Hadly, and to offer as some solace for a dull evening the new novel, 'Night and Morning,' which he himself has found interesting; and also to venture the hope, for their intellectual eminence is not unknown to him, that his books may bridge over the gulf which has hitherto lain between them, and facilitate the action of the neighborly feeling which on his part at least has always existed. In this hope he remains their very humble servant, &c. &c."

"What induces this affability in the gentleman of Willow Dale?" said Ellie, refolding the note. Willow Dale was the name of Mr. Harmstead's farm.

"I suppose he is willing to recognise us as human beings," replied Zoe, "and for myself, I don't see that he is our superior in any way. It is not in our stars, Ellie, but in ourselves, that we are such very humble persons, and there is no need at all that we should live in this isolation but for your foolish humility and diffidence. What if Mr. Harmstead's parlor has a bright carpet on the floor and yours has not; what if Mr. Harmstead has five hundred books and you have only five;

and what if he dines with silver plate and you without; must you therefore insist that you are of a lower range in intellect, in feeling, in all that makes a real distinction in society?"

"You talk eloquently," Ellie said, "but before carrying your ideas into practice, I have a little story to tell;" and so, having trimmed the lamp and stirred the coals, Ellie laid aside the new volumes and the note, and saying by way of preface that what was in her mind was yet no "story," she proceeded to relate what is contained in the next chapter.

THE STRANGE GARRET

“LET me see—it is now twelve or thirteen years since Mr. Harmstead first came to our neighborhood—I remember well the first time I ever saw him. We were coming from school, Rebecca and I, and barefooted rustics we were, when he overtook us, and, adopting what he supposed to be western manners, I suspect, began talking with us: first of our master, then of the village, its scenery, and the character of the people about us. I had never seen any one before who was so well bred, so refined, so gentlemanly as he; and I remember well how mortified I was for our bare feet, and our rustic appearance altogether. Even what I knew, I could not say half so well as though I had been talking with Mr. Hill or Uncle Dale, whom I had always known. In short, my idea of perfection was realized, when I saw him.

“Sometimes I saw him passing afterward, and sometimes when going to or returning from the village, for he was always busy overseeing his workmen, and it required a good many to transform Mr. Hinton’s brier-smothered farm into Willow Dale. He had always a smile and a kind word when near enough to speak. Sometimes we saw Mrs. Harmstead, a pale delicate looking woman, but she never smiled or seemed to notice us in any way. She was rather a pretty woman, but in declining health, when I first knew her, or rather when first I saw her. Her dress was of some dark material; and as she walked about the yard and garden, she was always enveloped in a crimson shawl. She had been, as rumor said, an heiress, yet through failure of some speculations her husband had lost not only his own estate but the greater part of hers; and their removal to our

neighborhood had been in consequence of fallen fortunes, as the loss of wealth involved also the loss of position in their native city.

“And, in our little democracy, you know, more than now, they were thought very great people at the time of their coming among us. Many persons indeed thought it well enough to be on terms of friendship with the nursery girls, and through them to obtain occasional glimpses into the drawing-room, or to purloin the fashion of Mrs. Harmstead’s caps and wrappers. Others only ventured a timid rap on the kitchen door—placing themselves on terms of social equality with the lower servants for the sake of saying they had called at Mr. Harmstead’s.

“There were some few rich or stylish families about here at that time, but they were exceptions—not enough to redeem the general character of the society, which was in truth, sufficiently uncultivated; and it is no great marvel that Mrs. Harmstead thought us little better than barbarians. I think, however, I may claim for our village even at that time a semi-civilization; but she could not or would not place herself on a level with her neighbors, with any sort of grace; and though she sometimes tried to be cordial, it amounted to nothing more than affability, implying always something of condescension. The obtuse perceptions of most of her visitors—and for their own happiness this obtuseness was no misfortune—prevented their apprehension of things, so that tea-drinking with the fine lady was of frequent, and on one side at least, of happy occurrence.

“‘What a charming person Mrs. Harmstead is,’ said one and another, ‘you don’t know how much you lose in not making her acquaintance;’ but notwithstanding their entreaties, we were not prevailed upon to call, close neighbors as we were. My mother, who was as decided in her ways of thinking as Mrs. Harmstead was in hers, could not conceive of the possibility of there being any oneness of feeling between city bred people and plain farmer folks, unmindful that human nature knows no barriers, and that however different our circles of thought, there are always points that will touch. I was young

then, and it is not strange that Mrs. Harmstead, accustomed to the amenities of educated manners, should fail to see through the husk of awkward rusticity that enveloped my intellect—any intellect at all. How could she separate me from the class to which by birth and education and manner I belonged when I had given and could give no evidence of superiority; indeed, there was no mechanic's daughter nor a milk-maid in the neighborhood whose advantages and opportunities were not greatly above mine; and yet even I can scarcely lay my forgiveness on the grave of the innocent offender.

“I think, now, she must have been a kind and really obliging woman. When Rebecca was sick, she came, without ceremony, bringing her many little delicacies, and showing her gentle attentions, for which I fear she received less gratitude than she merited. She brought some conserve of roses once, I remember, and it was remarked by some of our folks, that she doubtless wished to exhibit her silver cup. I mention this, to show you how every thing which came within the range of luxury was regarded. These little attentions of Mrs. Harmstead quite won my love, and but for one untoward circumstance we might have been friends. When Rebecca was gone, I cannot tell you how lonely I was, my life had become a blank, and I never prayed so earnestly as I did when the clods rattled heavily down on her coffin. We had been always together, and now there was no sympathy for me in the world. Henceforward, I must go to school alone, sleep alone, be alone everywhere. My new dress and bonnet and slippers were first worn at her funeral, and I had no pleasure in them.

“One night, as I was returning from school, Mr. Harmstead overtook me; he was alone in his carriage, and asked me to ride. My new slippers had not been obtained to wear, of course, and my feet looked red and cold, for the frosts were come; and Mr. Harmstead, greatly to my mortification, told me I must be more careful of my health, and not neglect to wear my shoes any more. Ah me! it was not my fault that I did not wear my shoes. He talked to me very kindly, and when we reached the graveyard, and I said ‘Let me get out here,’ for I had never gone by without stopping, he seemed to feel

sorry, and insisted on taking me all the way home; but when I saw the high-heapt grave, the tears would not stay back, and reining in his horse, he lifted me out, and opening the gate for me, said, 'Don't stay long, and don't cry, my dear little girl.'

"I think he was really interested by what he knew of my deep sorrow, and that his wife at least pitied me. A day or two after this, she came to our house and asked for me. I trembled as I presented myself: no man nor woman had proffered a similar request before. A half-dozen young ladies were to take tea with her in a day or two, and she wished me to be of the number; no doubt the little party was made with special reference to me. I was still half a child, and had always been regarded as quite one. I knew neither how to decline nor accept her invitation, and stammered something to the effect, that I should like to come if I could; and Mrs. Harmstead left me, saying, she was sure I could come, and she would confidently expect me. The young women, she had asked to her house were noisy, confident, and ill-bred persons, whom I but slightly knew and liked not at all; nevertheless I felt that her intentions were kindly, and that I should so consider them; but I received no encouragement about going, and when the day came round, and I said, 'What shall I wear, mother?' she answered, 'Wear where, my child?' as though she had no thought of my going any where; and when I explained, she added, 'If you are going into fashionable society, I have nothing to say, except that I think you will make but a poor show there.' I had cried for an hour, passed another in wishing myself out of the world and was just tying on my sun-bonnet to go out to Rebecca's grave, when I was told that Mr. Harmstead was come for me, and that I could go if I wished.

"Drying my tears as well as I could, I made myself ready. The arts of the toilette I understood but imperfectly, as you may conceive, but if I had been an adept it would have been all the same, for my limited wardrobe admitted of no variation. Before descending, I surveyed myself in the little broken glass that hung on one side of my chamber, and even with no contrasts at hand unfavorable to myself, was but ill satisfied.

And here, I may as well describe my whole appearance. I was in that transition period most awkward of all—my hands and feet overgrown and distorted with toil and exposure, the wide hands converting the glove's length into breadth, and leaving the upper portion uncovered, and the feet, unaccustomed to such confinement, quite over-running the delicate slippers I had brought from town."

"Oh, Ellie, do show yourself some mercy!" exclaimed Zoe, changing her position uneasily; but the elder sister was in no mood to spare herself, and without making any reply, continued—

"Constant and careless exposure had ruined my complexion, never fair, and my dress was as ill-selected and ill-made as you can imagine. On this occasion, I wore a coarse cotton fabric of flashing colors, and without cape, collar or ribbon to relieve it. But my bonnet I looked to as the redeeming feature; it had cost enough to have made my whole dress, in elegant simplicity, yet it was a great deal too large for me, a great deal too stylish for me, and its purple ribbons and flowers did not suit the olive tint of my face. The traces of tears were still distinctly visible, and a bitter consciousness of all this restrained every word and action; still, I tried to smile, hoping Mr. Harmstead would not see me as I saw myself.

"I do not flatter myself now that he did not. He had made no effort with a view to his appearance, but his black gloves and gracefully fitting gray sack rendered him unlike the farmers I was accustomed to see. The day was pleasant, and he did all in his power for my enjoyment. Almost any one else would have been pleased and flattered, but I was neither. On arrival at his house the little self-possession I set out with nearly deserted me—partly that a black boy took charge of the horse, and partly that Mr. Harmstead conducted me, as politely as though I were some great lady, toward the piazza where Mrs. Harmstead was waiting to receive me, gaily mantled in silks and furs.

"The girls were already assembled—every one in holiday attire, and seemingly in the pleasantest spirits imaginable. I felt none of their happiness, and could not join in their sprightly

nothings. I did not wish to be classed with them, nor thought of with them. And yet I appeared no better than they; I could not talk so well; and what right had I to think of being singled from them? None, certainly. This I knew, but it only added to my vexation. I was annoyed at being there at all, and angry with myself that the thought and feeling which were in me were so completely hidden by my rusticity. I might have done well enough if I had acted naturally, and spoken simply of the things I knew; but supposing I had a great part to perform I went through a course of acting which was foreign to me—adopting stately silence for the most part, and speaking in high-sounding phrases, which neither my habits nor education warranted. I had conceived the notion, common enough to ignorance, that in the better circles of society every thing was done and said by rule and measurement.

“Mr. Harmstead, after jesting for a time with the girls, threw aside his coat, like a native countryman, and went out to some rural employment, and Mrs. Harmstead played the humble hostess to admiration. She talked familiarly of the making of custards and puddings; the times and methods of gardening; the best systems of household economy; and many other things which she never practiced and never expected to practice. I think, however, she was resolved to make the best of circumstances, and in fact did attempt cheese and butter making, as well as placing herself on a level with her neighbors. On this memorable occasion she mingled with children and nursery girls and kitchen girls and ill-bred women, as though our being born free and equal were the highest and most unquestioned truth of her creed.

“Apples and cider and nuts were given us in true country style, with the exception of the silver service. The young ladies who thought they were conferring as much pleasure as they received, and failed to see how much that was so pleasing to them was assumed merely for effect, felt so entirely at home presently as to criticise the carpet, curtains, busts, and other furniture within their observation, with a freedom and coolness quite interesting. It had not been thought necessary to open the parlor for our accommodation, and an apartment, used

generally as a library and tea-room, served for the entertainment of the little party.

“The cloth was laid betimes, that we might have the twilight for homeward walks, and some of the girls who were most expert and at ease, assisted in arranging the table, and even kindly lightened the labors of the cook. In short, all was going merry as was possible, when the sudden rattle of carriage wheels before the door, in the gravel-way, caused a new sensation. A glimpse sufficed to show that the newly-arrived guests were not spirits of our order. For myself, I had a confused vision of silks and furs, and plumes and ribbons, and black broadcloth and gay shawls, and then a more dread consciousness of my red calico and white cotton hose, before the parlor received them. Mrs. Harmstead found her situation embarrassing, very evidently. With both orders she could have done well enough on separate occasions, but they would no more mingle than oil and water.

“Mr. Harmstead came in and *put on his coat*, saying, laughingly, as he passed into the parlor, “How blest you are who have no city friends to bore you; but I must submit with as good a grace as possible.” So he bowed himself out and in. She, to her guests, said her nurse-girls and the children were having a little jubilee, which in accordance with the habits of the country must now and then engage her a moment; and thus continued to give us a little of her society. We should have our tea first, she said familiarly: her other friends would want little but bread and milk; and so the nursery maids and kitchen girls and children and country girls sat down together, Mrs. Harmstead doing part of the honors and consigning a part to the upper domestic.

“After tea it was evidently expected that the little party would disperse; but for some cause I was invited to remain—perhaps that I had farther to go than the rest. At any rate, I was asked to stay, and did stay; for feeling that I had not made the impression I wished, I was glad of an extended opportunity to retrieve myself. I need not say how miserably I failed. In the midst of a company of fashionable and educated people, I appeared shockingly out of place: my dress

had never appeared so red, nor my hands so brown; indeed, I had never felt so ungainly, so embarrassed, or such utter detestation of myself and the whole world. Their discourse was chiefly of some new discovery in science, and for all I knew of it they might as well have talked in Greek. No one however paid any attention to me, except to look at me sometimes, as I tried to shrink from observation, in a way that seemed to question, How on earth did you chance to be here? One of the gentlemen, indeed, asked me whether I had ever been in the city, and if I best loved milk or cider; and sometimes Mr. Harmstead spoke to me aside, as it were, and of matters familiar to me, such as whether we kept a large dairy, whether I knew how to sew, and whether I liked best to work or to play.

“I cannot tell all my humiliation and mortification. I wished I was in the barn, in the woods, in the depths of the sea—anywhere except there; but how should I get out of the room? I could not, and so remained until the company withdrew to the piazza, to witness some wonderful feat of Master Harry Harmstead’s dog. Now is my time, I thought, and seizing my fine bonnet, I made my escape through a side-door; but as the gate closed behind me I heard some one call, ‘Miss Hadly! Miss Hadly!’ I quickened my pace, however, and did not look back. In a moment Mr. Harmstead was at my side, urging the impropriety of my walking home alone, and requesting that he might be permitted either to go himself or to send Cæsar with me.

“My eyes were full of tears and my voice trembling, as I declined his civilities, and through the gathering darkness, and under the storm which had commenced falling, I walked home alone.

“You may smile, but the sufferings of that day were terrible, and I have not since crossed Mr. Harmstead’s threshold—not even for the funeral of Mrs. Harmstead or little Harry; and when you spoke of a bright dress, and proposed to call there, I was reminded but too sensibly of all these little incidents.”

The rain had long ceased to beat against the windows; the clouds were flying wildly along the sky, their torn edges glittering with moonlight, and the cutting wind came sharply from

the north. The new books had not been opened, and tossing the polite note in the fire, Zoe lighted the night lamp in silence, and the two sisters retired to their chamber—neither speaking—both thinking bitterly of the past, hopelessly of the future. Little thought Ellie, as she mused in the darkness, that neither the plummet of joy or sorrow had as yet sounded the depths of her heart. Little thought she that her hitherto clear vision could so easily be obscured.

MRS. PARKS'S PARTY.

“PRIDE above all things strengthens affection,” says one who has gone through every winding of the human heart, and whether in all instances this may find an application, it is eminently true of particular natures. Beneath a quiet exterior there was in the bosom of Ellie Hadly great decision and strength, with a depth of pride which even she herself had never fathomed. When Mr. Harmstead first came to the neighborhood of Clovernook, he was certainly greatly superior to the general society among which he took up his residence; not that his mental endowments were very great, or better perhaps than those of some of his neighbors, but his had been brought out by education, and they found expression in graceful manners and polished phrases, while theirs were imbedded in the clownish fetters from which their position and circumstances of life had in no wise tended to free them. This distinction between him and the persons to whom she had always been accustomed, Ellie had detected long years ago, and the consciousness that at the time of their first acquaintance she had not the slightest claim to equality of social position with him, still recurred with bitterness as well as with sorrow.

Indeed, she could not but acknowledge to herself how strange it was that he should have sought the intercourse and sympathy of his neighbors at all—now that years had been as stepping-stones to elevate her thoughts and enlarge her vision above the narrow prejudices which she inherited; for even she had now to cross the circle of rural pursuits and pleasures, within which she was born, to find any spirit congenial with her own, and how should he, who had been accustomed always to the bril-

liance of educated mind, do homage to the little light that burned through ignorance and superstition, choked by the incessant dust of the tread of cattle or the moving of wheels. It was strange that the current of his thoughts should have flowed so readily into these new channels, that he should have taken so wide an interest in the little plans of his neighbors—the cutting of a new ditch, the painting of a fence, or the design of a cottage. By such demeanor, however, he lost nothing of caste, but was esteemed for it not only as a model gentleman, but also as an example of goodness, and he exercised constantly on those about him a refining and elevating influence. Chiefly through his instrumentality, in the course of a few years, the neighborhood of Clovernook had been changed from a thinly inhabited and ill-cultivated district, to one abounding with green lawns and spotted with vineyards and orchards, ridged with clipt hedges, and sparkling with public edifices. His own farm of Willowdale, with its level meadows, nicely trimmed groves, picturesque gardens, winding walks and shrubberies, would not be recognised by the proprietor, who, twelve or fourteen years ago, ploughed around blackened stumps, and through patches of briars and thistles. Friends of his have been led to build houses and cultivate grounds, and these have induced others to do so, till Clovernook may boast of as many attractions in point of taste and utility as the pleasantest summer retreat in the vicinity of any of the cities. And it has no reason to shrink from the closest inquisition respecting the general intelligence or refinement of its inhabitants, among whom even our old friends, Mr. Middleton and Dr. Haywood, now find so many equals that they rarely think of going in to town in search of society. True, there were many persons in our village in its advanced state whose natural pre-eminence, scholastic attainments and greater wealth entitled them to more consideration than could justly be given to Mr. Harmstead, but still there was no one who received more. He had earned a distinction by being the pioneer of elegance and refinement among the people, for his predecessors of the same rank had lived in selfish isolation; and no follower in his path could ever attain to the same popularity. Mrs. Harmstead had never been so much a favorite;

her neighbors never felt really at home with her, though sometimes they pretended to be so; she never loved the green lane so well as the paved street, nor our kindly but coarse hospitalities so well as the more soulless civilities to which she had been accustomed; and before any better phase of things was perceptible, the fretfulness induced by her ungenial transition wore away her life. Even her dust was not permitted to mingle with that of the villagers among whom she died, but was borne back across the mountains to more stately repose in the vaults of her family. For years previous to the time when Ellie related to her sister the reminiscences in the last chapter, the proprietor of Willowdale had been bereft of the solace and companionship which first hallowed his new home. But his widowhood made him none the less a man of the people, and many fair hands plucked salvers of fruit in his vineyards and gathered bouquets in his gardens. Nevertheless, years went and came without his having yielded to the soft influences with which he was constantly surrounded, and the sending the books to Ellie was a more decided overture than he had been known to make, for the intimacy of any woman, in his later years.

Though five-and-forty, he was still youthful in appearance, as he was actually young at heart. There were no betraying streaks in his brown and glossy hair, no lines along his forehead, and no dimness in his eyes, or effort in his smile, but he was still erect and handsome, and even to sixteen a fascinating man. His grounds, his cottage, his library, were the admiration of every body, Ellie not excepted, though she passed Willowdale in her frequent visits to Clovernook, especially if the owner were inside, as though she saw nothing there particularly worthy her attention. If the necessity of recognition could not be obviated, she gave it him, but as if she knew little of him, and that little were not much to his credit.

Thus, perhaps, they might have lived forever, but for that destiny which shapes our ends, regardless of our own determinations. I have spoken of pride as the strengthener of affection, and have said that in the heart of Ellie there was no want of it. It was this that had kept her from listening with more kindness to many an honest and thrifty wooer; for the heart must find

shelter somewhere ; if not in love, in ambition or pride. " He is a very good young man," it was her habit to say, of one and another who sought, with various attentions, to win her regard, " but his preference is nothing to me." So the years went by, till girlish fancies kindled no more at a glance, and she had little need of calling pride to her aid for the subduing of wayward nature. Still, there was a sealed fountain in her bosom that had scarcely been troubled. Perhaps she was already conscious of the hand that could unseal it, and for this reason fenced herself about with old and bitter memories.

A few evenings after that I have mentioned, and when the feelings it had awakened were quite subsided, as Ellie and Zoe sat reading the new novel, there was a rap at the door, but on the entrance of the visitor, the crimson went down from the cheek of the elder sister, and the momentary light faded into more than her habitual expression of discontent. He was greeted by Zoe as Mr. Martin, by Ellie as William. It was our grown-up terror of schoolmasters, now a tall stripling, whose natural awkwardness was rendered ludicrous by an affected ease and gracefulness. Having little love for his parents, he had, so soon as released from restraint by a sufficiency of years, gone out to make his own way in the world, and he was now employed as the head man of one of the wealthiest proprietors in the neighborhood. He was well satisfied with his position, never fancying that it might be thought doubtful by some persons, and by others regarded as necessarily restricting his intercourse to servants or people of situations similar to his own.

His kindly and democratic employer admitted him to equality, at least so far as admission to his table and conversation went, and this gave him some vantage ground, of which he availed himself to the utmost. He had called simply as the bearer of a note, but protracted his stay through the entire evening, lingering even in the open door, after having risen to depart for at least half an hour—saying over and again, in the most familiar way, " Now, girls, you must come ; Mrs. Parks and all of us will be so disappointed if you don't. And after you have once been and found the way, you must come often.

You can just come through the fields—there are only two fences to climb and the creek to cross—there is a big log for a bridge—and then one corn-field to go through, and so you are in sight of the house, and have only the meadow for the rest of the way; so you will be sure and come often—won't you? Mrs. Parks and all of us will be glad to have you more sociable. Now you will be sure and remember to come; but if you never come afterwards, you must come Wednesday night. I expect we'll have the greatest kind of a time."

The wind blew the flame out of the fire-place, and quite extinguished the lamp, but heedless of either warning he remained repeating the same phrases until the sisters having repeatedly assured him of the acceptance of the civilities of which he was the messenger, fell back on silence as a last resort, and the young man finally descended the steps.

"Well," said Zoe, laughing, when he was gone, "shall we go, Ellie?"

"Not I," and the elder sister seated herself before the fire, in darkness, and resting one cheek on her hand, seemed not inclined again to break the silence.

Zoe was in high spirits, caused partly by what she termed the kindness of Mr. Martin, and partly by the invitation from Mrs. Parks. "'They would meet a few friends only, and in an informal way. Mrs. Parks hoped they would do her poor house the honor,' &c. &c. I wonder if Mr. Harmstead will be there?" she said, in the hope of interesting her sister in some way.

"I don't know," replied Ellie; and for the rest of the evening neither spoke at all.

But during the intervening day or two the expected party was discussed, and carefully considered in all its lights and shades, not as something from which they could excuse themselves at pleasure, but rather as though the happiness or misery of their lives were depending on it. And indeed to them it was a great event.

Ellie urged the expediency of sending an apologetic note, but Zoe's voice was still for going, and so action was delayed until they were obliged either to go or appear disrespectful by remaining silently away.

"What do you propose to wear?" asked Ellie, when the morning of the day was come.

"I hardly know what will look best."

Ellie said she could not decide for Zoe, but for herself she had no choice, and should wear the last year's delaine. The younger sister said something about its having been always plain, and now, really old-fashioned; but Ellie simply repeated that she had no choice—that if she went she must wear the old dress—but that she preferred to remain at home, and that Zoe should go without her.

"No, no—you must go, too," urged Zoe; "and if you are not pleased, I will never ask you to go with me anywhere again."

And so, passively, but neither pleased nor satisfied, Ellie consented.

Scarcely was the sun set before Zoe was in readiness, and leaving the evening tasks to her sister, she sat down to await the hour of departure. Her dress was a simply made white muslin one, and though worn without any ornament but her black curls, she certainly looked pretty in it.

Punctually at seven o'clock, Mr. William Martin was on the ground with Colonel Parks's little wagon, and after waiting half an hour for Ellie, who had the tea things and the milk to attend to, the party set out.

"I would have come with any one else more willingly," said Ellie, as she smoothed her hair and drew down her sleeves, for they were too short, preparatory to entering the parlor, from which sounds of mirth came annoyingly to her ears. "I thought we should get here before any one else, or I would not present myself, looking as I do, and with this Martin, for all the world; and just see this old brown dress! why, Mrs. Parks's waiting-maid looks lady-like in comparison with me. I wish I was at home. I am not fitted for society in any way." And she stood in trembling apprehension of what seemed a terrible ordeal; and as Zoe stooped to pull down the skirt, and make it seem a little longer, she felt her tears drop on her head. In vain she said, "You look well enough, dear Ellie, and no one will perhaps notice at all that Billy Martin is with

us; but if they do, what of it? If we have no position but one so easily lost, it is not worth much."

Glancing at herself as though some sprite had transformed her into an uncouth shape, Ellie said they had no position to lose, and both descended in silence. The rooms were brilliant with light, and filled with gay and well-dressed people—some at the whist table, some sitting, and others standing, in little groups, talking gaily, or in a tone which intimated the greatest confidence. Naturally enough, many eyes were turned in the direction of the last comers, and to Ellie it seemed that she was the object of all the company's observation. Mrs. Parks came forward, and said, "My dears!" with a familiar kindness, but her manners and those of all the assembly were so new to Ellie and Zoe, that self-possession, the basis of all grace in behavior, quite deserted them, and they had really never appeared so ill at ease, or so removed from their fit element.

And before they had become at all accustomed to the showy style of the furniture, the brilliant light from the chandeliers, and the general air of elegance and fashion all around them, Billy Martin, or "William," as every one was heard to call him, seeming in no wise inclined to leave them for a moment, completed their discomfiture by calling out, half across the room, and with an affected familiarity, "Harmstead, here are two of your neighbors, that you don't seem to see."

Mr. Harmstead advanced, and bowing low, offered his compliments to the ladies, gracefully but very briefly, and expressing a fear that he was interrupting a *tete-a-tete*, withdrew to a distant part of the room, where he was presently engaged in a game of backgammon with a lady of sixty, who, coquettishly tossing back her curls, thin and gray, said, after exclaiming, "Oh, you wicked man!" on losing some point in the game, "Is it true, Mr. Harmstead, that you have selfishly consecrated Willowdale to yourself—all to yourself?"

He asserted that rumor did him wrong in any such reports, but that greatly against his will, the ladies not only passed himself but Willowdale without a glance. "True," he added, bringing his hand down on the board, "and my little neighbor here can testify to the fact," turning to Zoe, who by this time

had been conducted to his neighborhood by a very young rosy-cheeked and lily-handed gentleman, who talked of the universal brotherhood of mankind, the tendencies of the human to the divine, and the speedy return of paradisaical times;—of all which he made very little clear to the mind of Zoe.

Poor Ellie, now utterly deserted—for “William” left her when Zoe was gone—sat demurely in the gloomiest corner of the room, her ungloved hands folded together, and her face, with its steadfast and mournful expression, looking beneath her simply combed hair, and contrasted with so much gaiety, more plain than usual. Now and then, indeed, some kindly-disposed old gentleman paused from his round, and conversed a little—perhaps of the best method of making pumpkin pies, perhaps of the superior excellence of home-made bread, or of the attractive warmth and beauty of wood fires. Zoe, from her more genial behavior, and it may be, too, from her more lady-like appearance, received many attentions, and found the evening delightful even beyond her hopes, so that she forgot her sister—forgot every thing, in the bewildering pleasure of the occasion.

When refreshments were announced, Ellie saw group after group leaving the parlor, till she was finally its only occupant, when Mr. Harmstead abruptly entered, and whether he saw her or not, withdrew as suddenly as he came, apparently looking for some one whom he did not see.

By this time, “William,” who had missed her from the table, came kindly to her protection. He tried his best to please, presenting Ellie whatever was accessible, between and behind the half dozen persons who stood before her. Hidden as she was, however, she could not fail to see her sister at the opposite end of the table, smiling to the smiles of the delicate-handed man I have mentioned, and bandying repartees with the voluble Mr. Harmstead, almost against whose face floated the curls that had been familiar with papers and combs for fifty years or more.

Not vexed and with petulance merely, did she see this, but with bitterness and something like hatred of herself and of the world. Again in the dark corner Mr. Harmstead presented

himself—perhaps in pity, she thought—and challenged her to play with him. Ignorant of the game proposed, she excused herself with more coldness and formality than were quite necessary, but the gentleman was determined, and she finally yielded. But her first cast of the dice was with a needless violence, and they went rattling across the table and over the floor in all directions. She saw smiles, quickly suppressed though they were, and the crimson of her cheek was followed by pallor and by moistened eyes.

Soon after, quietly, but with a heart swelling with rebellion against every thing, she retired, attended by the escort with which she came; and leaving Zoe in the midst of the pastime, she returned home to discontented reveries and sudden resolutions, born of rage and drowned in tears.

A WINTER'S CHANGES.

THE next day Ellie and Zoe talked much of the past evening. The younger sister had been delighted, even though she had found no one but herself in a white dress; and she could not help thinking that Ellie might have been as happy as she, if she had not permitted her foolish sensitiveness to stand in the way; and undoubtedly this was true, in part, yet it was Ellie's misfortune, and not her fault. And of all situations, I can conceive of none so really comfortless, as that of a superior intellect, weighed down with petty oppressions which, in the first place, hinder its development, and, when through years of unaided and half-thwarted endeavor, it comes in some sort to the light, hedge it round with circumstances that prevent its recognition. The bright fountain may be away down in the earth; but who sees it under the brown clay and the heaps of stones and the weeds that grow thick above it? Who values the gold in the rough ore as much as in the exquisitely wrought jewel? But where talent, or even genius, is invested with any peculiar and decided awkwardness or ungainliness, it seems most hopeless of all: the beholder may be conscious of its presence, but he will not reverence it; or one may even have intercourse with another, greatly his superior, for years, and never once suspect there is any preëminence; because the possessor of the finest intelligence acts not himself, but as he conceives circumstances require him to act; else the appointments of his neighbor's house, or the affable flow of his conversation, confuse or restrain him, till his thoughts find no words in which to clothe themselves.

Many a distinguished author, but for the publication of his

works, would have passed for a clown all his days; and others, for the want of mere verbal facility, pass life in obscurity.

There were several women in Clovernook, at the time I write of, who looked pretty, and conversed with sprightliness, and were called by everybody brilliant; but Ellie Hadly, plain, obscure, and depreciated, had in her soul creative energies which entitled her to be regarded as of a more elevated order in nature.

Drinking in the light of the sunset, running over the hills with the winds, or joining in the wild chorus of the birds, were the sources of her sweetest enjoyment, unless a rarer felicity was in the indulgence of her own thought and feeling, or in the companionship of bards among their dwelling-places in the mystical realm of dreams. Sometimes, too, hidden away in some velvety hollow, where the tinkling of the water chimed to the melody of her heart, she talked all day with the muses, and laying her cheek close against the fragrant earth, was lifted in rapt visions away from the smoke and turbulence that are in the world. The blue walls of air, that other times divided her from dreamland, crumbled down, till, though she saw not the flowers that grew about her, nor the verdurous boughs that shadowed her couch, she felt that the frosts of time had no power upon either. What were the daffodils in the hands of spring? what were the plenteous billows of the harvest, or the mists that wrap like golden fleeces the hills of autumn, were it not for the imaginations that come into our hearts, making them beautiful and glorious?

A week or two went by; Zoe, unusually happy and cheerful; and Ellie maintaining the settled calmness which, if not despair, is hopelessness. The young "reformer" had found Clovernook an exceedingly attractive place; and since first meeting the sisters, at the house of Colonel Parks, had more than once edified them with his orations of the "good time coming;" and whether it were the anticipation of a universal jubilee, or little glimpses of a lesser paradise, revealed by the light of smiles and glances, I know not, but Zoe had never seemed so joyous or so hopeful. And besides, she saw many things that might be made available, and without any visible enlargement of means—the style

of her dress, and the cast of her behavior, underwent a perceptible improvement.

"Oh, Ellie," she said one day, approaching the white pine table, on which her sister was moulding bread, "I have made a plan!" "What is it?" Ellie asked, quietly smiling at the enthusiasm she did not share; and adding after a moment, "you have grown utopian lately."

Zoe, after a little blushing and stammering, replied that she believed her plan was feasible, and proceeded to explain that she had been thinking Ellie was wise enough to teach a school; and that as the school house was vacant, there was a fine opportunity of her talents being made useful to others, and profitable to themselves.

"I have not sufficient education," Ellie suggested, "or if I have, it is not of the kind requisite for such employment; the little I know has been gleaned from chance sources; I know nothing thoroughly, and I doubt if my superficial acquirements could be turned to the least account in this way."

But Zoe continued her encouragement, and after some days hesitation, Ellie finally resolved that she would try; and night after night, by the light of a candle, she sat at the work-table, reviewing geographies, grammars, and spelling-books; and though her father asked her repeatedly, why she was thus wasting her time, she persevered, and when this discipline was accomplished, there remained two terrible ordeals to go through—the acquisition of a certificate from some authority in the city, whom she was afraid to see; and the subsequent visiting of the school directors for their approval and concurrence. For this last terror, she had slight encouragement in an evening dialogue at home.

"Do you know who are the school directors, father?" she said, carelessly, as she poured the tea.

"Why, yes," answered Mr. Hadly, "one of them is our neighbor, Mr. Harmstead, who pays more attention to the flowers in his garden, I think, than to the education of the village children."

"I thought Mr. Harmstead had done as much for the neigh-

borhood as any one else," said Ellie, though, if another had spoken in his praise, she would probably have been silent.

"Oh, he is a good man enough, for aught I know," said Mr. Hadly, "and he gave me some vines, and one or two trees that he had brought from France, but he talks so fast I can hardly understand him, and then he has so much fine company, and one thing and another, lately."

How these things militated against the gentleman, it would have been hard for Mr. Hadly to define; nevertheless, they were sufficient for his prejudices to rest on.

"But who are the other directors?" asked Ellie.

"Mr. Peters and Mr. Jameson—but how does the school interest you?"

Ellie said she had thought of teaching it herself; for she would not have dared to take a step of so much importance without her father's consent; however she was pretty sure of obtaining that for any step she might propose that was honest, and by which money was to be obtained. As for the capacities of his daughter, Mr. Hadly had no doubt but that they were sufficient for the writing of a commentary on the Bible; how she had ever learned so much he didn't know; nevertheless he supposed there was not much but that she either knew or was entitled to know. And so Ellie was not surprised when he said, "It's a good idea—you will make money enough by springtime to buy a cow or two, perhaps;" and then, with increased earnestness, he added, "don't get a speckled one, Ellie, nor one without horns;" and with more zest than usual, he partook of the supper. Ellie's hopes were a little dampened; she had already resolved on a very different appropriation; and in visions, she had seen long coveted books range themselves before her.

A few more days, and the first dreaded ordeal was over; she had trembled with fearful apprehensions, but her efforts thus far were successful; and the certificate was brought home, and deposited for safe keeping between the leaves of the great Bible.

"I will call on Mr. Peters and Mr. Jameson," said Ellie, "and perhaps it will not be necessary to call on Mr. Harmstead at all;" and so, one dusty morning, her shawl wrapt

closely about her, and the veil drawn over her face, she set out in quest of additional authorities. Mr. Peters's was nearest, and thither she first bent her steps; but that person was on the corner of his farm farthest from the house, ploughing his wheat-field. Mrs. Peters, who was fond of stating particulars, said the ground had not been broken up for seven years; but that it then produced corn higher than her son John's head, when he had one of these dreadful high-crowned hats on; and that the pumpkins which grew among it, without any care at all, were so big that one of them would have made a hundred pies. Mr. Peters, she added, was ploughing with colts. Thus edified, and having received directions what fields to cross, to avoid stubble, and where were the best places to climb the fences, Ellie pursued her way.

Arrived at last within speaking distance, Mr. Peters reined in his colts, and turning round in the furrow, leaned against the plough to give her audience.

After a few minutes conversation, Ellie understood that Mr. Peters, who had no children, had no interest in the school, and did not wish to be consulted. He said, however, he thought she would find no difficulty; the children were mostly small, and so ignorant that a woman could teach them well enough, for the rich folks would not patronize the district school; he would advise her to apply to Mr. Jameson, who was fond of business, and had half a dozen young ones; and he concluded by telling her that his colts did't like to stand.

In the newly turned furrow, Ellie crossed the field behind him in the direction of Mr. Jameson's.

He was a man of wealth, but lived in a primitive sort of way—his house and every thing about it being a century behind the age. The narrow and old fashioned skirts of the children were seen flying toward the house as Ellie came in view; they were not used to seeing strangers, though if Ellie's dress shawl had been less bright, and if a handkerchief had been tied on her head in place of a bonnet, their fright would not have been so great. Six dogs, from beneath sheds and out of unseen places, ran toward her, raising an outcry and discordant chorus, and an old hen with an untimely brood flew against her, beat-

ing her wings in her face—at which juncture Mr. Jameson, with a dilapidated volume in one hand, and a slender switch in the other, came hurriedly to her rescue, opening a path between the dogs, and seizing the enraged hen by a quick and courageous movement of his other hand.

Mr. Jameson employed his leisure time in reading law, and the book he held was perhaps a volume of Blackstone or a collection of forms. He was more interested in the school than Mr. Peters, but he felt some hesitation about employing a woman; winter was coming, there would be a number of big boys to go, and he feared she could not get along. However, he was only one of three trustees; he would call a meeting in the school-house the next week, and after a consultation had been held, advise her of the result. And with this rather slight encouragement, Ellie returned home.

A week went by, and the evening after the school-house had been warmed and lighted for the meeting of the trustees, as the girls sat in the parlor talking of the probable result, they were surprised by the entrance of Mr. Harmstead: but how different his manner to-night from that he maintained a week or two previously at Colonel Parks's. The reserve and formality which had then impressed Ellie with a consciousness of the vast distance between them, were all gone, and the equality he now acknowledged, and the cordial interest he seemed to feel in their plan, relieved them of the ungrateful embarrassment which had previously involved their intercourse, so that each was more pleased than ever with the other. Mr. Harmstead appeared to be agreeably surprised; he had made a discovery, as it were; he had found in his unpretending and retiring neighbor not only an equal but in many respects a superior.

The following Monday morning Ellie began the school. Fifteen or twenty as rude and unpromising urchins as one could well imagine, assembled, with all varieties of books, and each desirous of selecting his own studies, and pursuing them according to his own inclinations. But over the little troubles and vexations I must not linger—the duties she undertook were easy to her, and daily grew more pleasant as she proceeded.

The window by her desk looked out on Willowdale, and

daily, almost hourly, she saw its master ; and this was not all sometimes he visited the school—for the interest he felt in the children ostensibly, but it was an interest of sudden growth, and one that had certainly never been so evinced before. Sometimes these visits lasted till the school was dismissed, and then Mr. Harmstead would walk home with Ellie ; at first only to the gate—but occasionally it was cold, and he would go in for a few minutes' chat with Zoe, and the warmth of the great wood fire ; and gradually the few minutes were protracted to hours.

In the eyes of Ellie the world assumed a new aspect ; there is no need that I should explain the reason ; but the hope which gleamed before her eyes was wavering and uncertain, sometimes all brightness and beauty, and then dim and almost blotted out. Mr. Harmstead came often to the school, I said—often to the home of Mr. Hadly—and at length, though he talked not of love, his manner was no longer that of an ordinary friend. But he said little that was definite. Now he and Ellie were to have a cottage somewhere, and Ellie's tastes with regard to style of architecture and size were consulted, and Zoe was laughingly asked how she could get along without them. Then, again, Ellie was a mere child in his estimation, and he assumed a patronizing and fatherly tone, saying, "If you were my daughter, dear Ellie," and the like. Then perhaps a week or two weeks would go by, in which he would come neither to the school nor the house, passing both as though utterly unconscious of their neighborhood.

At such times, the school hours were monotonous and weary ; yet the necessity to think of the children's lessons kept them from the utter dreariness with which they dragged from twilight into the deep night at home. In such evenings, the sisters would sit in the firelight, silent, but impatient of every sound not made by the expected foot-fall, till it grew too late to listen or to hope. Then they would repeat the last night's conversation, and finally, saying something must have occurred to prevent his coming—that he would surely happen another time, gather hope out of despair, and falling asleep to the song of the cricket, awake to new watches and new disappointments.

Thus the winter wore by, and when the verdure of spring first crept upon the boughs, there came new troubles and regrets.

One evening, late in March, as they sat together in their accustomed places, a few smouldering branches on the hearth, and the window a little raised for admission of fresh air—for it was growing warm, though fire might scarcely be dispensed with—a step was heard on the threshold. A quick interchange of glances, a thrill, and then surprise and a sinking of the heart—the visitor was Mr. William Martin.

Zoe, less disappointed and of more natural gaiety, tried to seem pleased, but Ellie made no such pretence or effort, and retiring to the window, looked out on the gloomy settling down of night. Weeks had elapsed since she had met Mr. Harmstead, or since he had evinced the slightest recollection of her, for she had often seen him pass the house, and sometimes encountered his glances, as cold as he would have bestowed on any other acquaintance, in whom he neither had nor wished to have a particular interest.

Dismal looked the world before her: the clouds, with torn edges, flew fast across the sky, and now and then the half moon shed a melancholy light along the naked landscape. The rain had been falling for several days, and through the soaked valleys slender stalks were beginning to push their way. Close under the window, the broad leaves of the flags and spikes of daffodils, and the pale pink shoots of the sweetbrier, were visible, and along the ridges that stretched away to the woods the wheat was growing green. The world is bright or sorrowful according to the temper in which we view it, and had the sun hung in the blue middle heavens of June, the hours would have seemed to Ellie no less sad.

Wrapped away in her own thoughts, she heard not at first anything that was said. At length Mr. William asked her if she had heard the news, and receiving a negative answer, informed her that Mr. Harmstead had sold his farm, and was shortly to return to his native city—as rumor said, to be married.

Ellie saw now how much of the light of hope had been shining round her. The intruding visitor had innocently made

himself hateful : she wished he would go away, and that she might never again see him. How interminable the hours he stayed ! but he went at last, and her choking thoughts found utterance.

Zoe spoke more sanguinely than she felt. It was not reasonable to suppose Mr. Harmstead had so suddenly disposed of Willowdale ; and if that were true, he might neither be going to leave Clovernook nor to be married—for have not all his actions betrayed a love for you ?

“But he never said he loved me,” Ellie answered, hoping still for comfort.

“What are words ?”

“Witnesses—only witnesses.”

And how many contracts the most real have been broken, because there were no witnesses of them !

THE END OF THE HISTORY.

A few weeks of alternate hope and fear went by ; and through the freshening airs, and under the light of the full moon, Ellie was walking, but not now alone. Willowdale was sold, and Mr. Harmstead was going away, but in the autumn he would return, and other cottages might be as beautiful as that he had lived in so many years. Meantime there would be solace of his absence in his letters, if dear Ellie would permit him to write to her. What a new phase there was in the world, how all life's burdens were lifted away from her heart. When the long walk was over, they lingered yet at the gate, unwilling to part. That the happiness of the girl was in his keeping, he knew right well ; that he could give his into her keeping he must have felt, for that she was very dear to him I have no doubt ; and yet—and yet——

The hush of the deep night was around them ; both stood silent, and seeming for some cause impressed solemnly—whether for the same cause, I cannot tell. “How beautiful the world is,” Ellie said, at length, more perhaps to break the silence than to give utterance to her thought. “Now and here,” answered the lover, if lover he were, “I would die for you—it is a fit time now.” “Not so,” Ellie replied ; “life in its gloomiest days has seemed to me a blessing—how much more so now ; if you would die for me, why not live for me ?”

“Live for you ! I must tell you a story,” he replied mysteriously.

“What is it ?”

“Not now—I will tell you another time—to-night you are not prepared.” And suddenly dropping the hand around which

his clasp had been weakening for some moments, abruptly turned away.

“When shall I see you again?” Ellie asked, trembling, half earnest, half hesitating.

“Soon, very soon—perhaps to-morrow night,” and turning back the parting kiss was given calmly, and as one might bestow a benediction—and Ellie was alone—restless, unsatisfied, wretched.

The next day came and went, and other days and other weeks, but Mr. Harmstead came not. All the while she heard reports of his movements that were anything but agreeable to her—sometimes he was just on the eve of departure—sometimes already gone, without having said good-bye to her. At last she knew positively that he was going, and as she sat with Zoe on the piazza, listening to the tinkling of the water, and the mournful song of the whip-poor-will, they heard through the thickening foliage that shut the road from view, clear ringing tones, that both were quick to recognise.

Mr. Harmstead was come to say good-bye, and was accompanied by Mr. Martin. He neither found nor sought to find an opportunity of conversing alone with Ellie; he seemed to have nothing to say to her any more than to Zoe or to his companion;—in fact, he seemed to esteem them alike; he spoke of the future, of returning, and of the pleasure it would give him to meet them again, but he said not to Ellie that he would either live for her, or die for her; and when the parting moment came, he took her hand as he would have taken that of Martin, saying only, when he saw the sorrow she could not conceal, “One summer is soon gone, and then we shall meet;” but in a moment he added, “you will probably be married then.” Ellie said not “yes” or “no,” but pronouncing a farewell with as much calmness as she could assume, went aside into the darkness.

Zoe had no words of comfort—she felt that she might as well say Peace to the winds, or reason with despair.

It is in vain to attempt description of the anguish of that soul in which faith is crushed, and hope trembling and fading into death. Reaching across the graves of buried love are the

hands of the angels—as we go with offerings of flowers, to the sepulchre, we hear sweet voices saying, “not here, but risen,” but when we mourn the falsehood of the living, there is nothing on earth or in heaven to which we may bind our hearts; the past must be cast away, and there is no future; we can pray only for the dust to stifle the bleeding of our hearts, for eternal silence to shut from us the mockeries of the world. Our feet would be weary on the green hills of heaven in the first passionate consciousness of our desolation, and our lips parched by the sweet waters of life, if all that made an Eden to us here were wanting there.

The days passed wearily; spring ripened into summer, and summer faded into fall. Ellie had continued to teach the school, faithfully discharging all her duties, and trying to build up a new interest in life. In the shadow of the woods, near where the children played, she might be seen, thoughtfully walking to and fro, or leaning against the trunk of a tree, her book held listlessly, or her needle forgotten.

In October her term would be finished, and she pleased herself with making little plans as to what she would then do—the many books she would obtain for solace during the long winter hours; then, too, Mr. Harmstead was coming—and she would look less plain and old fashioned than he had always seen her, which would be some gratification. And so the time wore on, and the month came at last. The school was over, and the trifle, so wearily gained, divided with Zoe, who was to be married.

One hazy afternoon they went to the city to make long-talked of purchases. The bridal dress and veil had been selected, and Ellie, smiling sadly, said she would procure black ones for herself, when her attention was attracted toward a gay equipage, and the smiling and seemingly joyous recognition of Mr. Harmstead, was followed in a moment by glimpses of a stately woman by his side, the countenance beautiful, but its expression proud and half pitying.

Poor Ellie had thought herself stronger; but she knew not till then how much of hope had lingered in her heart. How should she know whither she went? How think of the miserable

pittance for which she had toiled? When Zoe arrested the current of her thought, by asking what she proposed for herself, she replied, after a moment's silence, "Nothing;" and opening the hand which had held all her worldly treasure, Zoe perceived that the purse was gone.

When the winter winds hung moaning on the casement, Ellie sat by the homestead hearth alone; but as the sympathy, to which she had been accustomed, was shut away from her, and as nature withdrew herself, spreading chill and blight in all her beautiful borders, she necessarily fell back on herself, and in herself found a greater sufficiency of resources than she had hoped.

It has always seemed to me one of the most beautiful provisions of Providence, that circumstances, however averse we be to them at first, close about us presently like waves, and we would hardly unwind ourselves from their foldings, and standing out alone, say, let it be thus or thus, if it were possible. When the morning comes through her white gates, lifting her eyes smilingly on us as she trails her crimson robes through the dew, we would fain have it morning all the day. But when noon, holding in leash the shadows, goes lazily winking along the hill tops, and the arms of labor rest a little from their work, where the fountain bubbles or the well lies cool, it seems a good season, and we would keep back the din that must shortly ruffle its placid repose. And when the phantoms of twilight troop out of the dim woods, with the first stars, whether the moon have all her golden filling, or hang like a silver ring in the blue arching of the sky, the time seems the most beautiful of all, and we are ready to say to the shadows, crouch back a little, let the ashen gray prevail. Night broods over the world, deep and solemn; away above us the still constellations go on their way, and throwing earthward wildering beams like golden ladders, whereon our thoughts may climb to heaven; clouds, with dark ridges, cut the blue, or build a wilderness of black along the edges of the horizon, or lie against each other, like squadrons in the offing of a mighty sea; and whether the winds run laughingly up and down the hills, or kennelled among the thick

forests, whine dismally and low, night seems a blessed time—a season of thought, or of dreams, or of peaceful sleep.

And so with the various seasons of the year. May, with her green lap full of sprouting leaves and bright blossoms, her song-birds making the orchards and meadows vocal, and rippling streams and cultivated gardens; June, with full-blown roses and humming-bees, plenteous meadows and wide cornfields, with embattled lines rising thick and green; August, with reddened orchards and heavy-headed harvests of grain; October, with yellow leaves and swart shadows; December, palaced in snow, and idly whistling through his numb fingers—All have their various charm; and in the rose-bowers of summer, and as we spread our hands before the torches of winter, we say, joyfully, “Thou hast made all things beautiful in their time.” We sit around the fireside, and the angel, feared and dreaded by us all, comes in, and one is taken from our midst—hands that have caressed us, locks that have fallen over us like a bath of beauty, are hidden beneath shroud-folds—we see the steep edges of the grave, and hear the heavy rumble of the clods; and in the burst of passionate grief, it seems that we can never still the crying of our hearts. But the days rise and set, dimly at first, and seasons come and go, and by little and little the weight rises from the heart, and the shadows drift from before the eyes, till we feel again the spirit of gladness, and see again the old beauty of the world. The circle is narrowed, so that the vacant seat reminds us no longer of the lost, and we laugh and jest as before, and at last marvel where there was any place for the dead. Traitors that we are to the past! Yet it is best and wisest so. Why should the children of time be looking backward where there is nothing more to do? Why should not the *now* and the *here* be to us of all periods the best, till the future shall be the present and time eternity?

So much of the history of a humble life as I proposed to write, I have finished; of Ellie's future, of self-abnegation, of humble and quiet usefulness, it is needless to speak. On her forehead she has taken sorrow's crown of sorrow; and as she goes about her household cares, giving, as much as may be, her

soul to peace, no one dreams of the inward bleeding of that wound which, only the dust of death will wholly stifle. Sometimes she builds her thoughts into careless rhymes, illuminated with the light of setting suns; but when with her touching delineations the fountains of feeling are troubled, no one suspects the heart and life whence they have come. Mr. Jameson goes to see her, now and then, telling her that there is no need cessity that she should live so much alone; and that his woman thinks her a pattern of excellence; and Mr. William Martin calls too, sometimes, and reiterates his invitations; but though she appreciates their kind intentions, she never extends her walks beyond the church or the graveyard; but often as she passes Willowdale, she repeats the line of England's gloomy bard—so simple, yet containing so much—

Thou art nothing—all are nothing now.

THE END.

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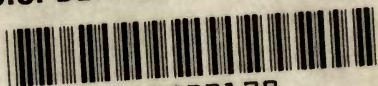
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